LETTERS

FROM

ALTAMONT

IN THE CAPITAL,



T O

HIS FRIENDS

IN THE COUNTRY.

Il n'y a qu'un point indivisible, qui soit le veritable lieu de voir les tableaux : la perspective l'assigne dans l'art de la peinture ; mais dans la verité et dans la morale qui l'assignera? Mons. PASCAL.

LONDON:

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DE HONDT, in the Strand.

M DCC LXVII.

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INTRODUCTION.

HE author of the following letters does not presume to put so stale a trick upon the public, as the pretending that they are genuine. He will be perfectly satisfied if the intelligent reader shall find nothing in them to contradict the probability of the following story, which is the plan of the work.

Altamont, the supposed writer of these letters, is the son of a person who silled, with credit to himself and use to the public, the post of a lieutenant in the army. He was not more distin-

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guished for his spirit and intrepidity in his military capacity, than for an inflexible honesty, and rigid austerity of manners in private life. He had received an university education, and had improved a strong natural understanding, by a close application to every branch of polite literature. He was a steady friend, and an improving companion; but with all these qualifications, he was not beloved in the regiment to which he belonged. The rigidness of his principles, and the austerity of his life rendered him obnoxious to the younger part of the corps; and a haughtiness of temper which could ill brook controul, made him as little respected by those of a superior rank. But, as his conduct had always been irreproachable, and his character for

for courage conspicuous in every service upon which he had been employed, he had many more secret than avowed enemies.

At about the age of thirty-five he married an amiable young woman, who died foon after the birth of her only child, Altamont; which loss contributed in a great measure to fix a melan-lancholy gloom upon his temper, which rendered him more than ever disagreeable to the social gaiety of his companions.

When once a man is become difagreeable to a whole corps, there is nothing easier than to get rid of him. A young man, with more passion than courage, one evening picked a quarrel with

with him, and, under pretence of being offended at something he had said, sent him a challenge. Conscious of neither being offended, nor having given offence, he resused to meet his antagonist in an hostile manner, till he had first met him in a friendly one to explain the cause of the quarrel. This was sufficient; the affair was properly represented, and he found himself deprived of his commission for the appearance of that cowardice which was not in his nature.

The gloominess of his disposition prompted him to take that revenge upon himself, which his principles would not suffer him to execute upon the author of his disgrace; and he determined to seclude himself for ever from

from all connections with the world. In order to do which as effectually as possible, he retired, with his infant fon, and two domestics, to the farthest and most inaccessible part of North-Wales; where he purchased a small farm, in a village confisting only of a few cottages, and at a considerable diftance from any market town. In this retreat, intirely sequestered from the world, he lived for five and twenty years; during the greatest part of which, his whole attention was bestowed on the education of his fon. The only companions of their folitude were the minister of the parish, and his two children, Henry and Charlotte, who were constant sharers with Altamont in the instructions which he received from his Father.

Altamont,

Altamont, by the goodness of his understanding and the sweetness of his disposition, shewed himself well worthy the attention which his father paid to him; and that filial piety, which he had been early taught to confider as the second great duty of his life, suppressed the defire which he would otherwise have had for leaving him, in order to fee that world, about which all he could read or hear served rather to raise than fatisfy his curiofity. In this fituation did he live till he was one and twenty years of age; about which time, Sir William B—, came down to canvass the county in order to offer himself a candidate at the enfuing election. Chance, rather than defign, brought him to the obscure village where Altamont and his father refided. He was man garwatta and not erreceived

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received and entertained with a politeness and urbanity so unexpected in that inaccessible part of the world, that he was eafily perfuaded to flay four or five days; and was, during that time, fo pleased with the understanding, the disposition, the simplicity of Altamont, that at his departure he prevailed on his father to intrust him to his care, with a promise to make a provision for him according to his merit. Altamont accordingly attended his patron to London; a young man with good natural parts, great honesty of heart, a good flock of fuch knowledge as may be gleaned from books, a total ignorance of the customs of the world, but a quickness of apprehension, which rendered him very susceptible of improvement. With this idea the following letters from

INTRODUCTION.

from him are recommended to the reader: and if any of them should be thought incompatible with it, the author only begs the candid reader to confider, before he condems him, whether the subject, or the manner of treating it, may in any degree make amends for it. And if he finds the point in view is either to expose vice, or inculcate the fentiments of virtue, let him not be too scrupulously exact with regard to the means made use of to obtain it: if the medicine is falutary, let him not be too nice about the vehicle in which it is administered, whether it is exactly secundum artem or not. All that the author farther begs is, to have the following performance confidered in the light of a weak effort towards making even our most simple amusements

ments conducive to the supporting the cause of virtue; in pursuance of a fentiment of the incomparable Diderot:" O quel bien (fays he) il en reviendroit aux homnes fi toutes les arts d'imitation se proposoient un objet commun, et concouroient un jour avec les loix pour nous faire aimer la vertu, et hair le vice. C'est au philosophe à les inviter, c'est a lui a s'addresser au poëte, au peintre, au muficien, et a leur crier avec force, hommes de genié, pour quoi le ciel vous à t'il doues? s'il en est entendu, bientot les images de la debauche ne couvriront plus les murs de nos palais; nos voix ne seront plus des organes du crime ; et le gout et les mœurs y gagneront. had galwollot add

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LETTERS

FROM

ALTAMONT

IN THE CAPITAL.

LETTER I. ALTAMONT TO HENRY.

SNATCH one minute from the continued hurry and fatigue of travelling, a fatigue you well know how new to me, to tell you and my friends that I am well. Heavens! with what rapidity have we measured what, to me, appears an immense space! No sooner had we got clear of those mountains which render our coun-

try (alas! why do I fay our country? I feem to have left it for ever) almost inaccessible, and gained a more cultivated part of the world, than we changed our method of travelling; we quitted our horses, and proceeded in vehicles, which having change of horses every ten or twelve miles, conveyed us with a swiftness wholly unknown to me, whose whole travels never exceeded a few miles, and that over rugged rocks.

How new does every thing appear! new faces, new dreffes, new customs, new world! To-morrow we reach the capital. Can London be larger, more full of people, than the last town we were at, Chester?

"I come, Sir"—my generous patron calls me; the chaise waits. Adieu, my Henry; wherever they convey my body, my heart is still with you.

ALTAMONT.

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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BEGIN already, my dear Henry, to perceive that I shall find more inconveniencies from an education almost entirely detached from any commerce with the world, than I was aware of. The sequestered way of life which my poor father's chagrin drove him into, and, of course, imposed upon me from my cradle, has rendered me as unsit for society, and as ignorant of the customs of the world, nay even of the island in which I was born and bred, as an inhabitant of another planet.

The thorough dislike and aversion which my father had conceived for any connection B 2 with

with that world from which he had met with fo cruel treatment, was the cause, as we have often heard him fay, of his retireing to a part of the island almost inaccessible to strangers, and where the natives were very thinly scattered. You well know how firictly I have been confined to fuch a folitude all my life. Books, indeed, I have been early brought acquainted with, and through them with men and manners of former ages; as to those of the present, I am as ignorant as if I had been born yesterday. For though every thing may be collected from books necessary to inform the mind and direct the judgment in matters of consequence, yet nothing but experience and observation can give us an infight into those minute customs by which the intercourse is carried on between people in common life. This I am made fenfible of every minute, by the awkward diffresses I frequently find myself in, for want of knowing how to act in common occurrences: and I am rather deterred from making the enquiries I would wish to do, by finding people less inclined to inform than laugh at me. You will think it strange perhaps that I should seem ridiculous for being ignorant of what it is impossible I should be acquainted with. But I find this fo much the case, that I must apply myself with the greatest diligence to learn those things, the ignorance of which, however trifling they may be in themselves, must put the wifest man in the power of a fool. The kindness of my generous patron will affift me in paffing eafily through the more active scenes of life to which it has introduced me. O my Henry, what a field has he opened to my view! How shall I be able to describe to you half the astonishing things I meet with! and yet what fatisfac-

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enjoyments to those who have been the companions of my solitude? Expect therefore, to hear the real thoughts of my heart, upon every circumstance I meet with; I shall write them as they occur, and send you a packet whenever I can.—Adieu. Be assured that wherever I am, you will there be certain of having a faithful friend.

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ALTAMONT to his Father.

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dear and honoured fir, erase the sond remembrance of all your tenderness and care? Can objects, however new, make me sorget your paternal instructions; or can I ever recollect with dry eyes, the pathetic prayers you made to Heaven for my welfare when I lest you? I trust, never. And yet I begin already to see the effects of that depravity of morals which you have so often warned me of. I am, at this time, amongst a people who seem to consound all distinctions of kindred, and by that means to forseit all the endearing advantages arising

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reciprocally from such a connection. To address another by the title of uncle or cousin, nay even of brother or sister, is reckoned want of breeding: the father calls his fon "Sir," and the mother speaks of her daughter by the title of " Mis -." What wonder then is it, if the fon treats his father with the indifference of a stranger, or the daughter claims an equal right with her mother? Surely the endeavouring to confound these connections, and to obliterate the memory of them, must be the furest method to lose the consequences of them. How easily is brotherly love forgotten, where brothers look upon each other as strangers! How easily will that fa-2 ther lose his authority, who pays his son a distinction which sets him upon an equality with himself, and which no rank of life can give him a claim to. gradual to maglubat ecorrecally from fuch a connection;

The focial connections of men not allied to each other, as they are formed upon principles of mutual convenience, may be broken through upon the fame principles; but the ties of blood are formed by nature; they therefore are facred, and ought furely to be indiffoluble, except for causes of the most important kind. These are the connections which form the most endearing ties of focial happiness. Whatever custom therefore tends to destroy their effect, however it may be supported, and receive a fanction from the caprice of makind, must be unnatural and despicable. May Heaven grant that I may never lose the fatisfaction arifing from a consciousness of having on all occasions not only acknowledged but approved myself a dutiful fon, to the most indulgent of fathers! Adieu.

ALTAMONT.

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

remaining. Was I to attempt to

London.

We have been in London about a month, during which time I think I have been in one continued hurry. I have never ceased seeing such a multiplicity of new objects that I have not yet arrived at the art of seeing them distinctly; and have only just had time enough to be assonished. We have often, my Henry, from the top of an high hill, taken a view of a distant and infinitely varied prospect: how long has it been before the eye could call itself off from the contemplation of the whole view in the gross, and attach itself to particular objects, so as to reduce the whole into some

fome order, and to contemplate its beauties with more ease! This has been really my case with regard to this city, or rather I think this world, for so it may be called without impropriety, as there is hardly a part of the known world which is not here by its representatives. Was I to attempt to describe its size to you, I should be at a loss for images by which to make myself understood. You will easily conceive the number of people which may be contained in a city which, besides the extent of ground it takes up, is built up into the air to the height of four or five stories. greatest difficulty I find, is in walking the streets. A man, unaccustomed to such a crowd, is infallibly carried along by the people as by a torrent of water; and I have more than once been conveyed a long way from where I intended to go, for want of being able to extricate myself from the throng fonte

throng which furrounded me. I frequently come home fore with the thrusts I receive from the elbows of those who are either more eager or more expert than myself. A man who is behind me, and whose business or pleasure requires haste, is fure, in paffing me, to turn me round; unless another, meeting me with equal eagernels, catches me as I turn and replaces me. This is only the case in that part of the town which is more particularly appropriated to bufiness, and which is properly called the City; the part of the town where the people of most consequence reside, and where my patron has a house too magnificent for me to attempt to describe, is less troublesome for passengers, as persons of fashion are conveyed in carriages of exquifite beauty, from one place to another, and leave the footways at liberty for those whose inferior fortunes oblige them to promote their

their health by the exercise of walking. You, who as well as myfelf, have been inured to hard exercise, and whose very amusements have been of an active and laborious kind, will perhaps be tempted to fmile at the thoughts of people in full health and strength being conveyed in a carriage drawn by horses to perhaps no greater a distance than you'or I should walk with ease in ten minutes: but what will you fay when I affure you that the polite method of conveying a well-dreffed man from one freet to another, is in a little box, nearly the fize of his body, flung between two poles and carried by two men? Believe me, my dear Henry, to be a polite man one must part with no small share of one's common sense. Adieu.

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free beauty, from one place to another, and TROMATIA.

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London.

CONCLUDED my last by faying it is neceffary for a polite man to give up no small share of his common sense; I am much afraid, by what I meet with every day in this town, he will hardly be able to stop there; I wish he may not find himself obliged often to part with some of his common honesty. It is matter of great amazement to me, that people, who are fo ready to acknowledge an obligation to certain duties in the general, should pay so little attention to the observance of them in parti-There is no one focial duty which you can name, that almost any man will

deny

deny his obligation to observe; and yet you will hardly be able to find one, the breach of which subjects any man to the, least contempt, or in the least robs him of the respect, or even esteem, of his acquaintance. I was yesterday in a large company where feveral people, whom I had been taught to have a respectable opinion of, were loud in their commendations of a person who was absent. They called him a worthy man, an honest fellow, an excellent friend, a good companion, in fhort they gave him every qualification which can make a man amiable. Amongst other encomiums, one person said "he was the happiest man with the women of all his acquaintance." As this was a phrase which I did not precisely know the meaning of, I took an opportunity of asking it of a person who sat next me: he seemed rather surprised at my question, but informed me, that a man was faid to be happy

happy with the women when his addresses to them were in general well received, and his attempts upon them generally fuccessful. But is this character (fays I, not a little furprised in my turn) compatible with that of an honest and worthy man? "O, perfectly fo," replies my informer; " it sometimes indeed, draws him into scrapes. The person of whom we have been talking, for instance, has lately had a very narrow escape of being obliged to marry a girl whom he had had an intrigue with. Her brother fremed determined to push the affair, but my friend luckily thought of the expedient of fending him a challenge for his insolence in interfering; and that the young gentleman did not relish." Can this man be an honest fellow? cried I with astonishment. "Why not?" I was filent; it was plain we misunderstood one another. gard to many thir go which I pleat. usibA

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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THEY who are fond of seeking for instruction, need never be idle. Though I have no particular employment to take up my time, yet I never find any part of it hang upon my hands. I pass my whole life in observation. I have been brought up in so total an ignorance of the customs of the world, that every common occurrence is, to me, a matter of importance. Every thing I meet with surprises me; and many things puzzle me extremely: I have no rule to direct myself by in my enquiries but common sense; and, with regard to many things which I meet with,

that is of no manner of use. When cuftoms are founded merely in extravagance, and characters actuated folely by caprice, to attempt to explain them by the rule of reason is as absurd as to measure milk by the foot-rule: it is not the proper standard to apply to them, though it is possible there may be some distant connection between them. Here is a custom, univerfally prevalent, which perplexes me beyond meafure to account for it. It is easy to conceive great comfort, and even great utility arifing from an extensive acquaintance; nor is it difficult to account for people of a reftless temper, and much curiofity, running from one company to another, frequently, even in the same evening, in hopes of feeing fomething new, or hearing fomething in one fet which they may not in another. But how shall we account for a number of people dreffing themselves with the greatest exactness,

exactness, and a profusion of expence, getting into their coaches, perhaps in a horrid, wet, dreary night, and driving from one friend's house to another, for four hours together, not only without ever feeing one of their friends, but even without any intention or even a wish of feeing them? At every house they leave their name written or printed upon a piece of card, as a token that they expect their friends to take the like trouble. Upon what principles must one set out in order to explain this custom with any tolerable chance of making it conformable to common sense? Especially when you hear those who practife it every night of their lives, join with you in crying out against the monstrous absurdity of it. But, you will fay, do these friends never meet? Yes; perhaps once in a month or oftener, one lady fummons to her house more people, exactnefs, C2 by

one half, than it will hold; fo that, allowing one person out of two not to obey the fummons, from being engaged in fome other place, the house is nevertheless sure of being at least as full as it can be. Perhaps you will think this scheme not fo advantageous for the enjoying the comforts of fociety; and that, fo far from any enjoyment of conversation, the lady of the house has hardly time even for paying the first forms of civility to such a crowd? It may be very true; but they meet not for the fake of conversation; it is not the fashion: their whole end in coming together is to form parties for cards; fo that when once the lady of the house has ranged her company, and forted them into separate fets, she has done with them, and leaves them to entertain one another. And in less than ten minutes their whole attention is fo ingroffed by the business in which they

they are engaged, that the lady of the house is no more thought of than the hostes of an inn; nor is it necessary for her to pay any farther attention to any of her company, except the particular fet in which she herself happens to be engaged at play. It is not easy for me to tell you, and impossible for you to conceive, how much the attention of old and young, high and low, rich and poor, is engaged in cards, from one end of this great town to the other. Play is a science as absolutely necessary for every one to acquire, who intends to be admitted into any company, as it is for him to learn how to make a bow, or give an answer when he is spoken to. Nay, I question very much whether an ignorance of cards is not the most unlucky failing a man can have; because I find a man with literally no other knowledge than that of the games of Whist and Quadrille, they

drille, Loo and Lansquenet, and who even never pretends to any conversation but what has reference to them, may pass through polite life with credit, and be thought a very agreeable man: at the same time that no talents, no amiable qualifications whatever, will atone, in a polite circle, for an ignorance or a diflike of play. A man who never plays must be contented to be received with pleasure, only at one time of the day. In the morning, when it is not fomuch the custom to play, he may meet with his share of esteem and respect; but in the evening it is far otherwise: he must be contented with bare civility at most, and has reason to think himself happy if he is not grudged the chair he fits upon, which might be fo much better occupied by a card-player. Adieu.

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ALTAMONT to HENRY. no ratenia, and serino curvation attornative as

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ns to Lotovo wallog & sallbridge London. HERE is nothing which affords matter of greater amazement to me, who have lived in fo sequestered a part of the world that even the necessaries of life were not to be gotten without difficulty, than the confidering how many hundreds of people, not only gain a subfiftence, but raife great fortunes by making and felling things, for which all the ingenuity I am mafter of will not enable me to find out a use. The people of this town are not contented with furnishing the body with every species of cloathing, not that it can require, but that the most fertile and luxurious ima-V-LETTER

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gination can contrive; they go still farther; they spend one half of their time in contriving wants, and the other in supplying them. They feem to have fet out upon these two principles; that no man would take any trouble for any thing if he could help it, and that no man would do any thing for himself, if he could procure another to do it for him. Accordingly there is hardly the most simple operation in nature, for the more easy performing which a machine of some kind or other is not invented; and a man who has had the misfortune to lose, or chooses not to employ any of his limbs or fenses, may meet with people ready, for a gratuity, to perform all their functions, and the flow

Is a shoe to be pulled up at the heel, a cork to be drawn out of a bottle, a small bit of food to be gotten from between the teeth,

מתכם לה לשולה מו

teeth, every shop will furnish you with two or three machines for each purpose, constructed on as many different principles: every one of which the inventer will tell you has many conveniencies peculiar to itself.

I was yesterday walking down a street, and saw written over a door in large letters of gold, "R. GREEN, Dentift." As I was much at a loss to guess what might be Mr. Green's profession, I enquired of a man who flood at his door. It happened to be himself. He informed me that he rectified all disorders of the teeth and gums; that he had the honour to clean the teeth of most of the nobility, and to scale them once or twice in a winter. I begged he would inform me what he meant by scaling. He told me that the heat of the stomach and the remains of the food we eat, teeth. **eaused**

caused an incrustation on the teeth, of the nature of scales; which, if it was not removed, would infallibly ruin them in a few years; and concluded with defiring he might have the honour of putting my mouth in order. I had been so often warned of the tricks of the town, that I did not know whether even the teeth in my head were fafe, so made my retreat with some precipitation. Pray ask our Charlotte, who scales the finest teeth I ever saw; I doubt Mr. Green would hardly allow them to be perfect though, without some affiftance from him. By this I found that none but they who could not afford to pay a dentist, cleaned their own teeth: I had before learned that many hundreds of our own nation, and many more from a neighbouring kingdom, gained a handsome livelihood by combing the hair of other people's heads; and I have been since informed that JEDW.

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that there are several people whose occupation it is to pare and keep in order the nails of other peoples singers. I live in a continual dread lest it should grow unpolite to chew one's own victuals; as I think in that case I should be completely starved; of which, by-the-bye, I at present run no small risk, from the ingenuity of fashionable cooks, who contrive to disguise every thing they dress in such a manner, that I seldom meet with any thing I dare venture upon, till my patron is so good as to inform me what it is composed of.

Would not one think that nature had so amply endowed us with every convenience as to leave us nothing to wish for, and that excess of happiness had obliged us to exert our ingenuity to frame some artificial wants for the sake of variety! Happy they who know no wants but what

affiftance from him.

what nature dictates, and whom neither luxury nor idleness prevent supplying them for themselves!

Adieu.

THOMATIA.

London

ROM my earlieft intakey, my ever hose of moured Sir you have spared no pains to infligue, inc., in the sub-principles of she Christian religion at the which end you conducted me through as the different parts of that inefficinable vocates which contains the faceed word of our Greature, and the precepts of our bleffed Reteeper. You frewed me dony which can be passed to dury which can be a stagistic of every focial dury which can be a stagistic to the happiness the gorpe, and how intrinsicly the happiness the gorpe, and how intrinsicly the happiness of the next life is commended with the gorpe, and how intrinsicly the happiness of the present, and all this in for that of the present, and all this in for that of the present, and all this in for

what nature distates, and whom neither luxury nor idleness prevent supplying them.

for themselves!

LETTER VIII.

ALTAMONT to his Father.

London.

ROM my earliest infancy, my ever honoured Sir, you have spared no pains to instruct me in the true principles of the Christian religion: to which end you conducted me through all the different parts of that inestimable volume which contains the sacred word of our Creator, and the precepts of our blessed Redeemer. You shewed me how wonderfully the practice of every social duty which can contribute to the happiness of man, is included in the commands of the gospel; and how intimately the happiness of the next life is connected with that of the present: and all this in so plain

plain and obvious a manner, that not a fingle difficulty occurred through the whole fystem. Judge then of my surprise, when, upon a more intimate acquaintance with the world, I find that the whole body of Christians has been long torn and divided by innumerable diffentions into a number of different fects, whose tenets feem to be as opposite to each other, as those of the Mahometans and Jews. As I was amufing myself the other day, in a bookseller's shop, I counted no less than seven or eight illustrations, expositions, and explanations of the facred scriptures. Surely, faid I, the scriptures which I have read had not difficulties fufficient in them to require all these comments to make them intelligible; they certainly must, formerly, have been very obscure, and it is the labour of these writers which has brought them to the intelligible state we find them

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in at prefent. "By no means," replied the bookfeller, " the scriptures themselves have been always in the state you now fee them in; but, as every fect has explained certain doctrines according to their own notions, disputes and controversies have arisen, which have produced more volumes than you fee in my shop." Well, replied I, I hope they have at last settled their meaning; I hope there are no disputed passages at prefent. The bookfeller flared, and replied, " he could not fay any thing to it." But a grave looking man, who was reading in the shop, and had overheard our difcourse, turned to me and faid, "Young gentleman, you are but little acquainted with the nature of these controversies if you think they can ever be at an end as long as there are men in the world. The true standard of belief will never be settled as long as each writer explains to you, not what

what the scriptures lay down to be believed, but what he himself not only does, but is determined to believe; and to support which he will strain every passage he meets with to his own purpole, and force even opposite passages to join in supporting his hypothelis. His passions have formed a system, and have drawn in his judgment to support it. Religion is, by this means, become less a rule for our lives, than a theme on which to exercise our ingenuity, and a subject for disputation. It is a long step with us, however warmly we may argue, from professing to believing; and a far longer from belief to practice. Whenever the practice of any tenet of our religion would interfere with our interest or inclination, we raise objections to the belief of the doctrine; and so the practice falls in courfe; and all this fophistry does mighty well, whilst people are in high health and spirits:

spirits: they know, then, how to keep religion from giving them any trouble, for if one feet is too strict for them, they can easily embrace another, whose tenets are less severe. But the case is much altered when they draw near the close of life; they are glad, then, to call in to their comfort all the pleasing promises of religion; for, though they cannot bear to live without pleasure, yet they can by no means wish to die without hope.

I was pleased with this man's communicative manner, and took the liberty to ask him what sect he professed himself to be of? "I am," says he, "a Christian; and, farther than that, I cannot answer your question. I conform to the public service of the church of England; because I think public prayer an indispensable

: manual

fable duty, and I think the form established by that church the least exceptionable of any: but I fuffer not that, nor any other church, to prescribe to me in matters of faith. I form my own articles of belief, upon the unerring evidence which our Saviour himself has been pleafed to leave us; and I endeavour to regulate my practice by the two great rules, of Piety towards God, and Charity towards man." "I hope, Sir," fays the bookseller, "the simplicity of your notions will not spread; for, if it does, many hundred pounds-worth of my flock may go to line trunks and wrap up grocery." The gentleman told him he need not much fear it, and took his leave. I returned home full of melancholy reflections upon the folly of human nature. which should take so much pains to make the way to heaven so perplexed and intricate,

tricate, when God himself has vouchsafed to make it plain and easy to the meanest capacity.

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ed to leave us; and a endersout to requestate my practice, he che is and Changy to of their terrards towards and Changy towards and and Changy towards and a single first temphony of your notions will not appeared to the if does nay so to have transfer and yrap up groanly to their terrary and the perfect of the change and yrap up groanly interest and the need of the change and the head of the need not thuch tear is and case his leave. I he remide man rold him he need not thuch tear is and case his leave. I the change and the need not thuch tear is and case his leave.

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You would imagine, from the first discourse which constantly passes between any two friends when they meet, that the inhabitants of this town divided their whole attention between the good of their sellow creatures in particular, and that of the community in general; that their first care was to approve themselves good Christians, and their next, good citizens: for, the first question they ask is always "how do you do?" As if their first care was your private welfare; the next, "what news?" As if their second consideration was the good of the state. Indeed the second

fecond question appears to come most from their heart; for every man here feems more concerned for the good of the state, than for that of his neighbour, or even of himself. The whole people are news-mongers, and meet by hundreds for no other purpose than to talk and hear news, and fettle the affairs of the nation. Whenever any public transaction takes an ill turn from mismanagement, the whole town immediately takes the alarm, and every man you meet, has, in half an hour, planned an infallible scheme by which the mischief might have been prevented. From whence it appears very clearly, that no bufiness ever met with ill success, but from the care of it having been unfortunately intrusted to the only person in the kingdom who did not know how it should be managed. I was, at first, a good deal perplexed to account for the knowaghal the good & Che state. Indeed the fecond

ledge which every person, even down to the lowest mechanic, seems to have of the public affairs; which I imagined were committed to the care of a few people, of consequence and ability sufficient for fuch an undertaking, and who, I thought, would hardly submit to inform the lowest of the people of the most secret fprings of their actions. But I was foon informed that every morning there were published a certain number of papers, containing all the transactions, not only of our own, but of all the nations in Europe, nay in the world; from whence a man might furnish himself with as much knowledge as would enable him to talk as well, and as long, upon the flate of public affairs, as any one who was ever fo intimately concerned in the management of themed could preve to contable nwo you

Happy in this intelligence, I determined to go every morning to one of the houses, where all this knowledge is to be purchafed, and lay in a sufficient fund of converfation for the rest of the day. One morning I began to put my scheme in execution, and applied myself so closely to my studies, that I thought myself thoroughly qualified to talk upon the affairs of the public as well as a minister of state. Accordingly, at dinner, I advanced a piece of news, which I was furprised to find received without much credit; and my patron rather disconcerted me by asking with a smile, where I learned that piece of intelligence? However, I thought the name of the Public Advertiser would immediately turn the tables, and procure that credit to my intelligence, which, to fay the truth, I did not much expect from my own affertion; for every thing here is believed according to the rank or figure of PageFl the D 4

the person who afferts it : but guess my furprife when I was answered coldly, & Ay, I thought fo; news-paper intelligence is never to be depended upon, Altamont; no body ever believes a word he reads there." -Here I was again at a loss. - What! fays I to myself, are all the people in this town then contented to throw away money, time, and attention, in writing and reading what none of them believe? Can it be possible that to many hundreds should thus pay for being deceived, and that in the same way every day of their lives? It must be so; for, upon liftening to the discourse of the company at table, I heard every article which I had read in the morning, either controverted, otherwise represented, or abfolutely contradicted.

Yes, my Henry, these people are inexplicable. anding at the places specified in the adver-

the person who asserts it; but guess of The The person rand will be a provided and the control of the control o as I faw myself cut off, by it, from what I hoped would have proved an inexhaustible fource of knowledge. "Pray Siry" faid I to my patron, with no small dejection in my countenance, " be so good as to inform me truly, are those papers which I read this morning entirely filled with falshoods? Is there no fuch person as John Evans, taylor, who makes you a fuit of clothes twenty per cent. cheaper than his brethren? Are there no fuch things to be had as Ef sence of Water-Dock, Balsam of Honey, Tincture of Centaury, and all those invaluable medicines, which, I flattered myfelf, w would foon eradicate every difease out of the kingdom?" "O yes," replied my patron, laughing heartily (which, by-thebye, is often the case when I venture to ask questions) " all these you may be sure of finding at the places specified in the advertisemente;

tisements; because these are articles of intelligence which the proprietors pay for having inserted; and, bad as the people of this town are, they do not love deceit well enough to pay for practising it."

What abundance of caution, my dear Henry, is necessary in such a town as this, where nothing can guard you from being deceived by the next man you meet, but its being contrary to his own interest to do it!

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ALTAMONT to CHARLOTTE.

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Your brother Henry, in his last letter, informs me that you have a great curiosity to hear my opinion of the ladies I meet with in this great city; and that you desire to hear it from myself. How hard a task, lovely Charlotte, have you imposed upon me! how shall I attempt to give you my opinion of persons whom I find so much difficulty myself in understanding?

The ladies of fashion in this place puzzle me more than can be imagined. One would be almost tempted to think, from a slight observation of them, that they spent their

their whole time in the most trifling employments; that the study of one hour, was only how to amuse themselves the next. Their most serious pursuits seem, to a common observer, to be such as one would hardly think worthy the attention of a sensible child of ten years old. A cap dressed after a mode not seen before, a gown just arrived from abroad, an awkward China figure, or some such trifle, feems, to those who have no opportunity of knowing them intimately, to constitute their chief happiness, and be the constant object of their pursuit. But this can never be the case; because my patron and several other men have affured me, that many of those ladies, whom I have seen so employed, are very fenfible women, and people of the first distinction, both with regard to birth and education. It must be only, therefore, to common observers, and to those

with them, that they appear to spend their whole lives in folly and trifling. They must have hours and days which they employ in the pursuit of such acquirements as are worthy the attention of women of lense, and people of rank. All the difficulty with me, is to imagine, when they find time to think feriously, even for half an hour. No lady, here, rifes till near noon; and no lady stays at home long after she is risen, unless the happens to have a fit of the head-ach, and then she cannot be very well qualified for applying to any thing; no lady has more than barely time to drefs herself before dinner, after she is returned from her morning's excursion; and, in the evening, no lady can exist out of a croud, either at home or abroad. Where then is the time for reflection, where is the time for reading, where is the time for acquiring all

all those accomplishments which, I am told, every woman of fashion possesses? I own I am at a loss to tell; unless they fit up all night, and facrifice their health to their eager pursuit after knowledge. This may be the case, and I am the more inclined to think it is, because, whenever I have had the honour of being admitted to visit a lady in the morning, I have observed a paleness and languor in her face and manner, which is always the confequence of broken rest. And yet it is amazing how foon they recover from their fatigue; for after having been hurried about all day, and having paffed the greatest part of the night at their ftudies, though they look a little pale and faint in the morning, yet they always recover their looks and spirits before the evening, so as to enable them to go through the same fatigue again; which, though repeated every day, feems neither

to affect their spirits nor their complexion. How little would a formight's fitting up to attend a fick father have affected one of these ladies, which almost cost you your How happy would it have made life! your friends to have feen your complexion fo foon restored to its native bloom! What pleasure must it be to ladies with such conflitutions, to perform all the laborious attendance due to a fick father, husband, or child, with all the eagerness of affection, and, at the fame time, without any injury to their own health !- They certainly must derive this strength of constitution from use; for I observe that mothers take great care to inure their daughters to this kind of life from their earliest infancy. I have often feen a child of eight or nine years of age, led through the whole fatiguing circle of public amusements, and acquiring an habitual strength of constitution, by sitting

to watch the revolutions at a card table, many hours after other children of that age have been in bed, and enjoying that peaceable repose, which is, I believe, inconsistent with the life of a woman of fashion, and therefore is what every child of fashion ought to be brought up with an utter contempt of.

I have been often told that there is no domestic province in which a mistress of a family has so good an opportunity of shining, as in the elegance of her table. In great cities like this, where eating is become a science, and that of a very complex kind, one can imagine it natural for a lady, who is desirous of doing credit to her husband's rank or fortune, to take some pains to make herself mistress of every branch of fashionable luxury. But the care of what their company are to eat, has of late, been found

found too indelicate, and indeed too laborious to fall under the direction of a lady of fashion; they have therefore transmitted that to a proper servant retained for that purpose, and confine their own attention to things, which, though they are contrived to occupy great part of the table, it never was defigned any body should eat. chicken, or even a fwan, has nothing in it to require the attention of the lady of the house; but she must employ all her contrivance to have plenty of hens and chickens in butter, fwans in forcedmeat swimming in lakes of jelly, sheep and lambs, goats and bulls of various materials. gravel-walks of fugar-plumbs, Chinese temples of cut paper, fountains of rose water, and, in short, such a collection of puerilities, though with fuch a shew of elegance, as would furnish out a proper banquet for a young prince, on his fixth or feventh birth-E bound

birth-day. These are objects worthy the attention of a lady of the first rank. And the profusion of expence which is thus lavished away, upon what, to a common understanding, appears an heap of useless trash, is amply made amends for in the noble field it furnishes for the lady of the house to exercise her genius and invention in; not to mention the fine subjects it assorted for the most brilliant conversation.

There is nothing so entertaining, I imagine, to those who understand it, as the conversation which passes in a polite circle, either at table, or in the drawing-room. For my own part, I am convinced that I am an infinite loser by not understanding half that passes. What a mortification is it to me to hear an hearty laugh, which I would wish to join in, but cannot for want of having heard or understood what it was that

that occasioned it! How many times have I fat grave when the whole company has appeared highly delighted with fome observation, made perhaps by a great man or a pretty woman, which, though to me it feemed the most childish, trite, ridiculous thing imaginable, must to those who understood it, contain some exquisite piece of humour, or delicately turned fatire. have once, when the company feemed remarkably chearful, and the conversation remarkably lively, endeavoured to collect some of the most brilliant fallies which were most applauded, in order to ask the favour of some friend, who is conversant in the great world, to explain their depth and meaning to me; but I do not know how it was, I found it impossible; for though the whole company had talked for feveral hours, it was impossible to steal any thing from them, or retail one word

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that had been faid. I could recollect but one thing, and that was, upon my faying that a long story, which an old gentleman with a star upon his coat, told about a hackney coachman, would have been just as intelligible without being interwoven with so many oaths and imprecations; a lively young lady informed the company that I was a methodist; which produced a universal laugh. As I did not understand the term, I said, "I might, for any thing I knew," which produced another.

You find I am so ill qualified for polite conversation, that you will easily believe me, when I say I have received more exquisite enjoyment from the native simplicity of a certain young lady of my acquaintance far, far from this gay town, than cles to which I have had the brilliant circles to which I have had the honour of because that a long front wint beauting in the coat, about a hackerer coachman, would have about a hackerer coachman, would have truomatian with so thank outless and impresentations. I very young and informed the company that I was a methodist which produced a universal laugh. As I did not understand the true that the true th

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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THATEVER points of morality the inhabitants of this town may be deficient in, they are by no means so in the duty of humanity. Throughout the whole place there are magnificent hospitals built and endowed, by voluntary contribution, for the relief of every disease and every accident to which mankind is liable: and, I am convinced, that the principle of compassion is so firmly rooted in the minds of these people, that, were a man ever so obnoxious to them (for fometimes the whole nation take it into their heads to hate one particular person) to meet with any accident. nods .

dent, even at the very instant in which the whole city was in a clamour against him, he would meet with many, who at the time they curfed him, would give him their affiftance. What inconfiftency, you will fay, is this! it is fo; and were I to point out some one characteristical mark by which to diffinguish this whole people, it should be that of inconsistency.

A house belonging to a lady of quality, was unfortunately burnt down; the whole family, amounting to eight or nine perfons, either perished, or escaped with loss of limbs. The whole town was in a consternation; nobody mentioned the accident without the strongest marks of compassion; many with as real forrow as if they had been intimately connected with the unhappy fufferers. I caught the general grief, not without being pleased to see so many dent

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thousand hearts so open to the feelings of humanity. Soon after this affair my patron told me that the post from Germany had brought an account that we had gained a victory over our enemies, but with the loss of fifteen hundred of our own countrymen. I concluded that the joy for the victory would be swallowed up in the grief for the loss of so many friends, and expected to fee every man with the utmost horror and concern in his countenance. If the loss of eight or nine persons, thought I, produced fuch a univerfal grief last week, what must be the consequence of losing fifteen hundred! how was I amazed to find the direct contrary to what I expected! the fifteen hundred friends were as much forgotten as if they had never been, and every man felicitated his neighbour upon the gaining a victory over enemies whom he never faw, and from the conquest of whom he never could

could reap the least benefit. I was quite at a loss to account for the feeming total extinction of that humane principle this week, which, in the last, I thought so rooted in the minds of the same people. But it seems it is always the case; they measure the terror of the accident by the distance at which it happened from their immediate inspection; and the body of a man taken drown. ed out of a river refore their eyes, will produce more melancholy reflections, than the death of thousands, by sword or earthquake, in another country. It was no wonder then, that the most trifling success, where every individual looks upon himself as intimately concerned in the success of the fleets and armies of the nation, should check the feelings of humanity, and obliterate all remembrance of their butchered countrymen. I was, the other day, hinting my fentiments upon this subject,

in a circle of men at a coffee-house, who feemed to look upon me with the greatest furprife, on finding that I thought any loss of our own too dear a price to pay for a victory over our enemies. I could not help enquiring a little how this inveterate enmity arose between us and our neighbouring nation, and what was the immediate cause of our present quarrel. It was a long while before I could get any answer to my question, but looks of amazement: I from thence concluded that I had only betrayed my own ignorance, by enquiring after what was fo well known by every one but myself. But I was much mistaken; for I found that every person in company was, in this respect, as ignorant as myself: all that they knew was, that we had been at peace, that we were now at war, that a Frenchman was a Frenchman, and that it was the business of

of an Englishman to knock him on the head. One of the most intelligent in the company informed me, at last, " that the cause of our present quarrel with the French nation, had originally been about the right to a tract of uncultivated land in the farthest part of the globe, and the right of catching fish, in another part as diftant; but that we had long fince gained these points, and were now disputing some rights with them, which, before this quarrel, we allowed them the peaceable possession of." And are these causes, replied I with astonishment, deemed sufficient by rational creatures to justify all the massacres which we hear of, both of friends and foes? or can it be confiftent with common fense, for so many thoufands of people to rejoice in harraffing a nation with famine, mifery, and death, with almost equal destruction to themselves; and

all this for advantages which not one infifty knows whether he possesses or not? I should imagine, that whenever men commit injustice, it is their interest that leads them to it, and that from a natural felflove they only prefer their own fatisfaction to that of any others; but for men to enter with such eagerness into the most flagrant acts of injustice, for advantages which at least two thirds of them not only can have no benefit from, but even no knowledge of, is as incomprehensible as a union between fire and water. I found I was the only person who was of this opinion; it never feemed to have entered into the heads of any of the rest, that a state of warfare might possibly be nothing but a series of the most flagrant acts of injustice, or indeed that any justice is due to an enemy. Is it possible, my dear Henry, that there should be two kinds of justice, and that the

the same which regulates the transactions between man and man, should have no influence over those between nation and nation? Surely the omniscient judge of all things will see with equal abhorrence a kingdom destroyed, or a widow's house devoured.

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HE people of this town, especially the common fort, feem either to have very vague notions of justice, or else to act with the same inconsistency with regard to that, as they do with regard to every other thing. There is a kind of punishment much in use here, which is expoling a man who has been guilty of certain crimes which are not capital, upon an high stage, with his head and hands thrust through fome holes in a board contrived for that purpose, which they call the pillory. The original intent of it was, as I am informed, to expose the criminal to the ignodefrauded minious

minious derifion of the populace, and by shewing his person in so public a manner, render it too well known for people to be deceived by him for the future. But it fometimes happens that, when either the criminal or the crime he has committed chances to be peculiarly obnoxious to thepeople, they are not contented with deriding or remarking him, but treat him in a rougher manner, and by pelting him with stones and dirt render his punishment little less than capital. - And this is a part of the execution of justice which the populace are, in general, very fond of exercifing; and is therefore the most dreaded part of the punishment; for I cannot find that shame and ignominy feem to be at all regarded by the inhabitants of this city. chrough tome be

I was, yesterday, present when a person was punished in this manner, for having destrauded

defrauded another of a confiderable fum by unjust pretences, and that in so base a manner that every body wondered how he came not to be capitally convicted. I pitied the poor wretch as he ascended the scaffold, and was furprised to find that the people gave him no moleftation, as I had heard his crime represented as being more dangerous to the fecurity of trade, the fummum bonum of London, than any other whatever. Whilft I was admiring the clemency of the people, I faw an unufual buftle amongst the croud; and presently perceived a poor man with his cloaths almost torn from his back, begging for mercy, which his perfecutors feemed not at all disposed to grant him. They hurried him on with all the marks of implacable resentment. The different treatment which they gave this poor fellow, compared with that which the man in the pillory met with, made me conclude that

that he either was a murderer or had been detected in some crime so detestable as to excite, in an instant, the persecution of five hundred people, who feemed to vie with each other in testifying their abhorrence of it. I, with some difficulty, procured an answer to the repeated questions I asked about the affair, from a man who feemed not at all interested in the buftle: he smoked his pipe at a shop-door with great composure; and, to all my eager enquiries, answered coolly, "a pick-pocket, I suppose." I thought he either laughed at my impatience, or misunderstood me, so applied to another, to learn, if possible, what crime this poor wretch had been guilty of, to call off the attention of the people from the person they met to gaze at, or to punish. I found my ferious friend had not imposed upon nor misunderstood me; those very people who felt no indignation against the person

person who, from the basest principles had defrauded his neighbour of a considerable sum, were persecuting, with the most brutal violence, a poor fellow who, from want, had picked a handkerchief out of another's pocket, worth half a crown. Yes, my friend, the characteristic mark of these people is inconsistency.

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

London.

THERE is a certain set of men to be met with in every coffee-house, and almost in every company, whose whole life is spent in one continued dispute. Law, physic, divinity, politics, the weather of last week, the dress of last year, the merit of an author, the taste of a soup, every thing surnishes them with a subject. They are neither to be silenced by demonstration, nor convinced by argument. Whenever you advance any thing in conversation, their sufficient thought is, how the truth of it may be plausibly disputed. If it happens to be a matter of sact, they deny it at once,

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and offer you a wager to the contrary .-You do not know, you fay, what a wager is; it is no more than this: I will give you fuch a fum of money if it is fo, if you will give me the same if it is not. That is a wager; and most probably the matter in question is not of a farthing's consequence to either of us, whether it is fo or not: if you happen to think fo, and decline the bet, it is well for the disputer; it anfwers his end, and faves his money. But if what you advance happens to be a matter of opinion, then the torrent breaks loofe; arguments are heaped on arguments; he will dispute your feelings, your fenses; know what you think better than you do yourfelf; and prove that you are not pleafed or displeased with what you think you are.

A man of this cast attacked me this morning, on my saying that there was a great

great deal of humour in such a book, and that it made me laugh extremely. He said it could not make me laugh, for it was the stupidest book that ever was written: I appealed to my patron, who assured him that it had made us both laugh heartily, after breakfast yesterday: as this was rather too plain a fact to be denied, and too much in our favour to bear a wager, he contented himself with endeavouring to prove, that though we possibly might laugh, yet we ought not to have laughed.

If you ask a disputant of this kind, what pleasure he proposes to himself in being perpetually engaged in a civil war? It is most probable that he will tell you, "no man in England loves a dispute less than he does; but that he cannot bear to hear people advance such absurdities." Or else, he will absolutely deny the fact, and say

that he never does enter into any dispute about any thing. If you attempt to convince him of the contrary, he will dispute upon that for an hour, and, at the same time, argue both for and against himself.

If this humour was absolutely harmless, it would be only ridiculous; but it is not so. One would imagine that it would be no difficult matter for people to keep their temper, who disputed upon a subject which was not of the least consequence to either of them: but so apt are we to be partial to our own opinions, that I have known a dispute about, perhaps, the exact distance between one town and another, or some such triste, end in a serious quarrel between two near friends, who have met with affection and parted with disgust.

How ridiculously absurd is the pride and and folly of desiring or expecting to be dictator

tator general to the whole world, and to allow no man to think or act but according to our directions! Difference of opinion between two sensible men arises from the different lights in which they fee the fame thing; difference of opinion between two weak men arises from the arrogant desire of instructing each other: the former are easily fettled; the latter never. The short on

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LETTER XIV.

ALTAMONT to CHARLOTTE.

London.

The more I study people of fashion in this place, the more I am at a loss to understand them. They seem, to me, to regulate their whole behaviour by certain rules, according to which every one's taste, every one's sentiments, every one's actions must be formed, without any regard to nature, or difference of seelings. The most prevailing amusement amongst them at present, next to cards, is music: every body therefore must have an ear and acquire a taste for music. You will say, as I did, that an ear for music, or even a capability of distinguishing sounds, must

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must be born with one, and is not to be acquired. It is very true; nevertheless a taste for music is, to all apearance, acquired every day in this place. The first thing that is necessary, is to get by heart the names of the most eminent performers upon every instrument, and those of the most favourite fingers: for both finging and playing is here a trade; and it fometimes happens that a talent for either of them is the happiest with which a man or woman can be born; as they turn to better account than the most useful science can do. When you have gotten the names of the fingers, you must next get the three or four first words of the favourite airs which they fing: for the tafte of the great world is fo confined, even in their most favourite amusement, that, perhaps, four or five fingle airs engrofs the attention of the whole town for a year, which next year give

give place to four or five others. When you have once attained to the being able to talk of these airs by their names, and to know who fings them best, you will make a better figure in conversation than if you knew all the music which ever was composed, except them. The next thing to be learned is the fashionable notions with regard to the comparative merit of the feveral performers; for here nobody is allowed to judge for himself; a few leading people judge for all the rest, who implicitly subscribe to their opinions. You are not therefore to listen whether Giardini accompanies better than Hay, or Manzoli fings better than Elisi, but you are only to remember that Giardini does accompany better than Hay, and that Manzoli is a better finger than Elifi. When you have done this you are qualified to go to the opera and come home in raptures. But there is one

one thing with regard the opera which aftonishes me, and which I cannot by any means account for. The opera (as you have often heard from my father, whose love for music, and thorough knowledge of it, led him to bring us early acquainted with it) is a regular, dramatic piece, interspersed with airs, which being fet to music is performed on a stage by persons who in their dresses and action are taught to represent the persons of the drama. Now as this performance is circumstantially the same every night it is represented, one would imagine that it must always please alike; notwithstanding which, I find that the felf fame opera, which pleases even to rapture, and which is frequented even to crouding on a Saturday, is dull and infipid and almost totally neglected on a Tuesday, which are the two evenings of performing. I have attended the opera on both nights, and endeavoured

to find out the cause of this distinction: but, as I can find no manner of difference, except the performers looking more out of humour on a thin night than a full one, I am apt to think it is one of the things which are only known to those who have been all their lives used to polite life. In many things of this kind I am tempted to lament my own ignorance; but in this case I am a gainer, as my enjoyment is doubled by it. Your brother tells me, my lovely Charlotte, that you accuse me of not having mentioned the public spectacles in any of my letters. I am forry that I should want to be reminded of doing any thing that would give you pleafure. I am now accidentally fallen on the opera, and will take fome other opportunity to speak of the play, which are the two capital public amusements for the winter, amongst two hundred inferior ones. By the monstrous expence

expence which the people of this town are at in providing fingers, musicians, an house, decorations, scenery, dresses, &c. for the opera, one would be tempted to think that it was the highest enjoyment they were capable of receiving; and yet, was you to fee the liftless inattention with which the generality of the audience fit, except during the performance of some one favourite singer, you would rather imagine they were paid for coming there. I faw this with aftonishment, and could not help asking my patron the meaning of it. "Why," replied he, " the case is this; where there is one person comes to the opera for the sake of the performance, there are fifty that come either for the fake of the company they meet there, or because it is the fashion once in a week to fit fo many hours in such a place. Among the number of people you see there, there are not perhaps twenty whose.

whose attention is not more fixed on the pit and boxes (which are the places where the best company sit) than on the stage. And even the attention they feem to afford a favourite finger, is not bestowed on his merit, but on the opinion they have of the judgment of the person who recommended him to their notice; for was it possible to make a bad finger look like their favourite, not half of them would be able by their ear to find out the cheat." Does it not appear wonderful to you that people who, from their rank in life and affluence of fortune, have it in their power to enjoy whatever entertainment their taffe leads them to, should thus suffer others to judge for them, and almost to persuade them that they are delighted, with what they do not care a farthing about? It amazed me, till I was more acquainted with the customs of the place; but I am now so

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I am persuaded was it possible for a few people of the first rank to go every other night to hear a child's whistle, the rest of the town would follow; and, as long as the humour lasted, insist upon it's being highly entertaining, nay talk in raptures of il dolce sischio. How happy are you who are in no danger of having the delicacy of your own natural taste spoiled, by conforming to the false taste of others! Your own feelings will lead you to relish beauty wherever you find it, without waiting till it has received the sanction of people perhaps far less capable of judging than yourself.

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N one of my letters to you I mentioned that there were in this city, hospitals for the cure of unhappy people afflicted with every disease. Amongst the rest there is one appropriated to those who have loft their fenfes; in which some hundreds are confined, and treated with all possible care and attention, and provided with every thirg necessary to their support and cure. But as it is impossible for these people to be confistent in any thing, in the midst of all the humanity which they shew to this most unfortunate part of the species, they are fo cruelly abfurd as to fuffer them to be 10000 exposed

exposed to public view, for a certain gratuity to the attendants, even under the most frightful circumstances of their disorder. Is it possible to imagine that in a city so civilized as London, the most dreadful calamity which can befal a human creature, should afford matter of amusement, and be a holiday spectacle for hundreds of the fame species! Curiosity is, I suppose, as prevailing as any affection of the mind; the very circumstance therefore of a madman's being confined, is a sufficient inducement with many people, of a moderate understanding, to wish to see him; and for the very fame reasons that he is shut up from public view, the common people, at least, are but too apt to wish to be admitted to him. But is this a curiofity which ought to be indulged? Is not the cruelty, the abfurdity of it, obvious at first fight? You will perhaps think that I am not very confiftent

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fiftent when after what I have faid, I tell you I was prevailed upon vesterday to visit this horrible abode. My business is to see every thing; I went; it was a long while before I could sufficiently conquer the terror which feized me at my entrance, to foeak to any of these unhappy wretches; but when I observed others did, I at last found refolution enough to enter into conversation with many of them. I could not find any who would allow themselves to have been put in there for any other cause than the foice of their friends: fome raved, fome fung, fome cried, fome laughed, fome begged fnuff, and told me they were no more mad than I was; and when I considered the place I was in, I was almost of their opinion. I met with one man who, though confined, looked remarkably fedate; I entered into conversation with him. He told me that he was not confined, but lived there rehat.

there by choice. I asked him if he had not loft his fenses? He told me that formerly he had, but that he had been fo unfortunate as to be cured. Was that, faid I, a misfortune? "Yes, Sir," replied he, " a very great one; when I was mad, I neither knew myself nor any body else. I had some intervals of reason, and so had the people about me, during which we all hoped that we might be cured, which we were foolish enough to think would be a happiness. At last I was cured, and fent out into the world; and what was the consequence? When I turned my view towards myself, I had a melancholy prospect; a man without money, without friends. When I looked round me, I faw people who were mad without any intervals of reason, and without any hope of being cured: for, Sir, we that are locked up here, are only called mad because our madness does not happen to agree with G 2 that

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that of the rest of the world. Every body thinks his neighbour mad, if his pursuits happen to be opposite to his own. His neighbour thinks the fame of him; but then their two kinds of madness do not interfere with each other. Now-and-then there comes an eccentric man, who thinks them all mad; him they catch and lock up here. Do not you think, Sir, that the man who lives retired in the country, thinks the courtier, whose life is one continued round of hurry and confusion, mad as any one here? And do not you think the buffling courtier is even with him? Yes, Sir, and this is the case all through life: and happy is it that it is so; for, if there was one plan which every body thought reasonable, every body would purfue it; and they would be, perpetually, in each other's way. But now the whole world is divided into little parties, each of which affociates lovingly together, and

and agrees to think all the world mad but itself. O Sir, what ridiculous scenes you would see, if every man who laughs at his neighbour in his heart, was to do it aloud! For my own part, I thought the whole world so mad, that I retired back to my cell, and determined to spend the remainder of my days there." I thought what he said was so reasonable, that I am, at this minute, uncertain whether he was mad or not.

of hurry and confusion, and as any one here. And do not you should the builting courtier is even with him: Yes, Sir, and Tromatier is to all anough life; and happy is a that it is to, by, i there was one plan which every body thought reasonable, every body would purfue it, and they would be, perpetually, in gagn other's way. But now perpetually, in gagn other's way. But now each of which affociates lovingly together,

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YOU, who in the early part of your life, paid so much attention to astronomical studies, and, as you have often informed me, once thought you bid fair for a discovery of the longitude, will be pleased to hear that, what you was always convinced was possible, is at last accomplished. A certain mechanic of this inventive city, has contrived a time-piece with all the principles requisite for that purpose; and, after repeated experiments, has obtained an order for the reward offered by the king for the author of so useful a discovery. There are not, however, wanting a party who say, that

that the people appointed to examine into the merit of the projector's claim, have been too hasty in their judgment; and that, by the time the money is paid, they will find that the longitude is just as difficult to be ascertained as ever. I was willing to ascribe the cavils of this party merely to envy, and to imagine it impossible that a committee of examiners, every way qualified to make the enquiry, should adjudge so great a reward to any man, but upon just pretensions. However, I am informed that it is no new thing for judgments of that kind to be given without sufficient caution. It is not many years fince a reward was offered for any person who should discover a certain cure for that dreadful disorder, the stone: a woman offered her claim, and received the reward for a medicine which has fince been found, in many cases, impossible to be administered, and in others

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ineffectual. A man has now offered to the public, a certain cure for the same disorder; and takes care, by the extravagance of his price, to reward himself: possibly the same future æra, which discovers the inefficacy of his remedy, may revive all the difficulties with regard to the discovery of the longitude.

I cannot help observing, that there is, in every science, some one mystery which employs the attention of every professor, and which, though many of them have thought themselves within sight of the discovery, always eludes their search. Astronomy has its longitude, Mechanism its perpetual motion, Geometry its squaring the circle, and Chymistry its philosopher's stone. And though it is possible that any or all of these may actually lye beyond the reach of human discovery, yet

the fearch after them is not withou used The researches of the human mind would foon be at an end, if we fought only after what we were fure to find. But when we have an idea of perfection before our eyes, which it appears possible for us to attain to, though ourselves and others have hitherto been disappointed, we find our endeavours animated, and every step towards it adds fresh vigour to our enquiries. Supposing us even to be in pursuit of a chimæra, how many useful truths do we arrive at the knowledge of in our way? How often, in searching for what perhaps we shall never find, do we discover what we fhould, otherwise, never have searched for. Had the alchymists been long ago convinced that the philosopher's stone was never to be found but in imagination, how many valuable secrets, which we pessels from accidental discoveries in the search of it, would have been totally loft!

The discovery of truth would not in all cases, therefore, be so advantageous to the world as it may be imagined. The very pursuit of a false notion, an imaginary good, is frequently of the highest use to fociety. How little would the world be obliged to a man who should convince them indisputably, that the principle of felf-love is fo strongly impressed on the heart of every man, that difinterested friendthip is a mere creature of the imagination, and never to be found in reality! How many noble attempts towards possessing it, how many flattering prospects of having found it, would fuch a conviction preclude! Nothing could give a greater check to the attempts of mankind after perfection, than the convincing them how far, in spite of all their endeavours, they must fall short of it. Were we once convinced that perfection, whether in a scientific or a moral light, lay abfoabsolutely beyond our reach, how glad should we be of an excuse for not endeavouring to attain to it; and what infinite labour would be necessary to bring us to a pursuit of what we were sure never to obtain!

May I, therefore, my ever honoured Sir, have constantly in my mind a doctrine which you once taught me, that, though perfection may lye beyond the grave, he certainly is most perfect who approaches nearest to it.

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ALTAMONT to CHARLOTTE.

you nobnot was forme mare before I could be N my last letter to you, my amiable Charlotte, I promifed to take an opportunity of writing to you again on the fubject of the theatrical entertainments of this great city. Since I wrote that letter, I have been a constant attendant at the play-house, in order to enable myself to be as good as my word. When you, your brother and myfelf, read together the tragedies and comedies of Shakespear, which my father recommended to us as the fineft that ever were written, a total ignorance of the manners of mankind, and even of the common occurrences of fociety, made them quite unintelligible AdT

gible to us; and though this new world into which I have lately been introduced has greatly enlarged my ideas in that respect, yet I sometimes still find myself at a loss to enter into the spirit of the drama, especially in tragedy. Shall I confess a truth to you? It was fome time before I could be prevailed upon to go to the representation of a tragedy. I faw, every day, fo many real causes for melancholy, even under the happiest circumstances of society, that I could not help faying, what occasion have we to form to ourselves imaginary ills, when life abounds with fo many in reality? Why should we be fond of introducing melancholy reflections even into our amusements? judged wrong: and the first tragedy I saw, convinced me that a sympathetic tenderness will give a pleasure to the heart, with out fuffering the judgment to decide when ther it is rational to indulge it or not. 2901197

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The tragedy which fet me right in this particular, was one almost out of date at this time, called George Barnwell; and perhaps that very simplicity, those very familiar circumstances so obvious to every one in common life, that beautifully simple concurrence of events, to prove the eafy transition from the least failure in a single duty to the most abandoned profligacy and most hardened cruelty, all which combined to make fo ftrong an impression upon me, are the very reasons for which this play is neglected, and hardly ever represented but by desire. The generality of tragedies I have feen, are so out of the road of common life, founded upon distress so unlikely ever to happen, and when it does, affecting men as a community more than as individuals, that, even if I do understand them, I feel myself but little interested in their events. Every man may feel the wretchedness of having an

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undutiful fon, an unnatural father, a false wife, a deceitful friend; but it happens to few to have kingdoms to lofe, or to have their happiness only dependant on the rife and fall of states. A captive queen will affect an audience of princesses, but a virtuous wife finking under the weight of unmerited diffress will affect the whole world. It appears to me ridiculous that the tragic poet, should have recourse to the captivity of kings, and the diffolution of empires, in order to affect his audience, when every focial connection would afford him a much finer subject, and enable him to do it with ten times the force, as well as ten times the use, in point of morality. For as the social duties are an inexhaustible fund of moral lessons, so a failure in any of them must be a continual source of domestic diftress; and can any thing afford a finer field for the tragic poet to exercise his genius -51150

nius in, than the placing in the most siking point of view, the misery which must necessarily attend the breach of those reciprocal focial duties, in which every individual must be more or less interested? This appears to me to be the most rational plan for tragedy; but I find few people of my opinion. Those who are more backneyed in the ways of men, are not affected by what paffes every day before their eyes; a poet must therefore have recourse to fomething marvellous, fomething out of the common road, in order to attract their attention. Neither is it the subject, the distress of the hero, that attracts it even then. However interesting the story, however noble the sentiment, if it is not expressed in a certain high-slown dignity of language, fuch as no man upon earth ever delivered his fentiments or bewailed his real diffresses in, and the tale carried on to certain

the poet will lose his labour; and his piece, however affecting, be despised, as being desicient in the first requisites of tragic writing. Upon the whole, therefore, I cannot say that I have been at all entertained with the generality of tragedies that I have seen; partly from their being representations of circumstances which I not only never saw, but which it was impossible I ever should see in common life; and partly, because the whole affair is conducted with such a parade of art, as precludes even the most distant hope of deceiving the spectator into a thought of its being real.

The case is far different with regard to comedy. There I have not only been made to forget that the whole was nothing but a siction from the beginning to the end; but, so exquisitely has the author hit upon

then. However interesting the story, how-

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the manners of common life, that I have almost been tempted to forget that I was a spectator, and to mix my remarks with those heard upon the stage. The true intent of comedy is to expose the vices or follies of mankind in fuch a manner as to render them ridiculous, and, if our passions would fuffer us to think so far, contemptible. It feems odd at first to conceive a number of people affembled together for no other purpose than to be convinced that they are all fools. It feems a difficult task to persuade them that they are so; for though all men are convinced of the folly of human nature in general, yet they fee it only confufedly, and in the gross; whereas the stage, by shewing it in particular characters, brings it home to them in fuch a manner, that when you come to act before their eyes what they themselves do every day, it appears so ridiculous, that they are ready to die with laughing.

laughing. Self-love prevents us from judging truly of the follies of real life, because we are concerned in them; but the stage, by shewing us the world in the light of a spectator only, makes us comprehend them in their full force. The worst is, that we are apt to carry the delusion out of the playhouse with us, and run into the same follies again, as if we had no concern in what we had feen ridiculed, or as if they were ridiculous only upon the stage; whereas, could a man fo far divest himself of all connection with the world, as to be meerly a spectator of what passes, he would laugh just as much at the follies themselves as he does at the representation of them. I am tempted to think that the same inconsistency which I have observed in the inhabitants of this town, prevails in the playhouse as well as every where else; for it is no uncommon thing for a man to fee his HI 2 own

own actual character represented before his eyes, join with every one present either in laughing at the folly of it, or in detesting the meanness of it, and retire from his box to commit the same the next hour, without the least alteration. The exposing the vices and follies of mankind to ridicule and contempt, is the proper province of comedy; but there is another branch lately introduced by a modern comic writer, which has for its object, not the follies or vices, but the peculiarities, of what kind foever, of fome particular perfon well known in the world. However this may be contrary to all the rules of decency and humanity, I am forry to fay that it feems to be a species of comedy in great favour with the town. author of this branch of comic writing is himself an actor, and possesses in the highest degree the talent of mimickry; his features

tures are so ductile that he can throw them into whatever shape he pleases, and he is particularly happy in affurning that peculiarity of air which distinguishes one man from another, perhaps more than the fea-With these talents he has nothing to do but to look out for a man with fome natural defect in his person, or some peculiarity in his air or manner, contracted from his profession or his pursuits; it is an eafy matter to put ridiculous speeches into his mouth, and accompany them with his look and gesture; the whole town acknowledge the likeness, and are entertained every night at the expence of an innocent perfon, who, without any fault of his own, is rendered fo ridiculous as to be almost afraid of appearing in public, left he should be laughed at by every one who meets him. The infinite contempt which a character of this kind deferves, is at present sunk in the H 3 extraextravagant love which these people have for novelty; but it is not to be doubted that he will meet with it when the humour has worn itself out, as he has already met with some disagreeable rubs from the resentment of those whom he has treated in this injurious manner.

Another species of comedy which is much in vogue at present, is a kind of opera, that I suppose took its rise from the taste for musical entertainments which is so universally prevalent. These operas are much frequented, and I do not wonder at it; for they are just calculated for the entertainment of those who have ear good enough to be pleased with sounds in general, and knowledge little enough not to distinguish between good and indifferent; which I suppose comprehends three sourchs of the inhabitants of this town. A man who

who hates all music, will never go to an opera of any kind; but the number of fuch is but small: a man who has a real taste for, and true knowledge of music, who so far connects a philosophical idea with it, as to expect to feel some effect wrought by it upon his mind and passions, beyond the trifling one of being pleased with the melody, will rarely go to an English opera; but the number of fuch is also inconsiderable: fo that the whole town, these two small parties excepted, are favourers of the English comic opera. And so, possibly, might I too, if it was an English opera; but it is not; the airs are almost all Italian, and composed originally for words, not more different in found than in fense, from those to which they are here applied. An ingenious writer * fome years ago, thought proper to expose the folly and absurdity of translating

^{*} Mr. Addison.

Italian fongs into English, because the expression would in all probability be lost by falling upon wrong words; but even that was better than the modern custom; because in a translation the original idea of the composer would be preserved, and the founds would still be suitable to the subject of the fong. But here the case is quite different; for one fingle air, defigned at first to express some one idea, is tortured to fit perhaps two or three fets of words, in as many different operas, not more differing from the original delign than from each other. All that can be faid is, that the people who frequent these operas, by losing the expression of the pathos of a song, lose nothing; for they would not feel it, if it was there; fo that the abfurdity to them is not fo glaring as it is to those who find a want of something which no accuracy of execution, no beauty of harmony alone,

can make amends for. You well remember what pains my father used to take with us, in our little concerts, to make us attend to the design of an air, or a piece of composition, of any kind; how often he has stopped you in the middle of a song, to shew you how to give proper expression to passages, which conveyed the sentiment with double force to the mind; you will not therefore be surprised at my disgust when I find all this most ravishing effect of music, as much neglected as if there was no such thing in nature.

I cannot close this letter, long as it is, without giving you one capital instance of the
absurdity of these people with regard to musical entertainments. Not many years ago,
all the town went every night in a whole
season, to hear the performance of a famous Italian comic opera called la Serva
Padrona,

Padrona, by Pergolesi, translated into the most execrable English, and the principal part performed by an Italian, who, though she would have done justice to the original, could not pronounce one word of the translation intelligibly. That you may the better judge of this, I send you both the original and the curious translation. Adieu, my Charlotte: you will find in the packet some other music of the same author, which I know will be the most luxurious treat to the elegance of your taste and the goodness of your heart.

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London.

MY ever respectable patron has this morning confounded me by an act of generosity equally unexpected and undeferved on my part. He sent for me into his dressing-room as soon as he was stirring, and this is the purport of his discourse to me. "My dear Altamont, the great inclination I conceived for you, during the four days I was entertained by your father, with a politeness and hospitality so unexpected in so barren and sequestered a part of the world, has been fully justified by your behaviour whilst you have been with me. I was greatly affected with the histo-

ry your father gave me of his unfortunate life; and hoped, by bringing you out into the world, and providing for you according to your talents, to make him fome amends for the ill treatment he fo undefervedly met with. I am pleafed to find that your abilities and integrity will justify me in any thing I can do to ferve you; I have therefore, without any apprehension of being disappointed in you, recommended you to the minister, and applied for a place in the post-office which is now vacant, the falary of which is three hundred pounds a year, and the fair advantages to be made of it, at least as much more. Only pursue the dictates of your own heart, and act with that honesty of intention, and obligingness of behaviour which have already gained you fo many friends, and you will not stop there; and I doubt not but I shall one day have a pride in faying, I was the person who brought

brought that man out of obscurity. Go now and dress, and I will carry you to the minister's levée. To-morrow you will enter upon your office." What reply could I make to fuch a fpeech? I made none, but by lifting up my eyes to heaven, with the tears running down my cheeks, and faying, "God bless you, Sir!" with a fervor which shewed the bottom of my heart. We went to the levée, and I had the fatisfaction of being received by the minister with a respect which shewed the high esteem in which he held my amiable patron. As my attendance at the office will make it neceffary for me to live nearer the part of the town where it is kept, I shall hire lodgings in one of the great streets in the city, and content myself with attending my patron whenever business will permit. Adieu, my ever honoured Sir; you shall hear from me again as foon as I am fettled in my new habihabitation; and I shall not fail to send you the news-papers to amuse you with either lies or truth, as it happens, by every post, as it is one of the privileges annexed to my new office, to send any thing to any part of the kingdom, under a certain weight, carriage free.

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London.

I AM now, my dear Henry, settled in a part of the town where I sear I shall appear in as singular a light to my neighbours as they do to me. You would think that every man in the city was actuated by the same spirit; they all have their eyes and thoughts fixed upon one object, Money, and differ in nothing but the methods they make use of to obtain it. Trade, in all its various branches, engrosses the attention of every man here, and seems to be esteemed the only thing in nature which can be worth the least notice. Judge then in how ridiculous a light I must appear,

who dared to maintain a dispute in a company of merchants, that it was possible for the nation to be ruined by the extensiveness of its trade alone. However paradoxical fuch a doctrine might appear to them, I think the truth of it may be very easily proved, if we confider the luxury naturally consequent from an extensive commerce, and a profusion of wealth in private hands; which alone was found fufficient to reduce the three greatest states which ever existed, the Roman, the Athenian, and the Spartan; and which, however flowly it may feem to act, must be perpetually tending to the fame effect in all other states: add to this the consideration, that this nation has not (as I am informed) for many years been engaged in any war, in which the commercial interest has not been the only, or at least, the most considerable cause of the dispute. All this kind of reasoning appears

pears to the citizens of London in just as abfurd a light, as the endeavouring to prove that a man may be in danger of death from enjoying too great a share of health; I therefore think it most adviseable to spare my remonstrances, and whatever aftonishment I may feel in my own mind, still persevere in keeping silence; though I own it is often pain and grief to me. when I fee a man who has fufficient to maintain himself and his posterity to the end of the world, labouring from morning to night, making himself an artificial famine, and feeling at once the trouble of riches and the pains of want, and all this for what? either to purchase the outward respect of relations who inwardly curse him every hour of his life; or to found an hofpital after his death: to which charity is a far less motive, than the thoughts of having his name engraved in gold letters over the

the door. You laugh at the thoughts of a man, who endeavours to render his whole appearance fo mean as hardly to entitle him to the civility of a bow, having any notion of vanity. I have read and heard, Henry, of the pride and vanity of kings and heroes; I have seen that of nobles, of courtiers in office, of great scholars and pretty women; but I never faw any that equalled that of a trader, who from indigent circumstances had amaffed a great fortune. In how many shapes does it appear! Sometimes hid beneath a thread-bare coat with two pins upon the seeve, it sneers at and holds in contempt not only the whole house of lords in its utmost splendor, but generofity, learning, benevolence, candor, and every defireable qualification. Sometimes in the midft of expence without elegance, profufion without tafte, and luxury without enjoyment, it struts awkwardly in the higher **fcenes** 303 M191scenes of life, and betrays its original meanness beneath an affected magnificence. The dress, the equipages, the house, the furniture, the entertainments of a merchant of this cast, are all outré; the management of every thing feems to be regulated by the fingle maxim, that if you have but money enough, nothing else can be wanting. If you attend the entertainment of a nobleman, you find no marks of expence but as it is subservient to elegance; if you attend that of a citizen, you find that expense is the first object; the single idea of money, which he was fo early taught in the compting-house, or behind the counter, to confider as the fummum bonum, you will find predominant through his whole life; and whether it shews itself in parsimony or profuseness, it is still the same idea, and only varies in its effects, according to the temper of the possessor. I find that a certain conteenes tempt

tempt which I have for money, merely as money, and of course for every man who has nothing else to recommend him, makes me appear here in the light of a very young man, who has feen but little of the world, and knows very little of bufiness; for all attention to money matters is emphatically called fo, as if nothing else was wor- . thy to be attended to. Perhaps they who judge so of me are in the right; and perhaps on that very account I have the advantage of feeing things in their true light, without being biaffed in my judgment by prejudices, early imbibed, in favour of things which do not deferve the attention fo generally paid to them. I am willing to allow all the advantages to the possession of money that ought to be allowed it; I know that without it the most virtuous man must be miserable; but still I cannot agree to allow it more than its share; and what I complain

of is, that when once a man has acquired, or is brought up with, a notion that the amassing wealth is the one thing necessary, the business of his life; every other acquirement, every other qualification, is facrificed to it; and the same contracted way of thinking, which makes him think money the greatest good, makes him esteem parsimony as the greatest virtue, and the multiplication table the greatest knowledge.

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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THERE is a fort of men, every where to be met with, who without any merit of their own, are acceptable where-ever they go. They never do any thing themselves which deserves your notice, but they know every thing which is done by all the world besides; and as they tell you every thing, it is a great chance but you may pick something out of their discourse which you would wish to know. A man of this cast, for the first hour he is with you, talks without ceasing, and his whole discourse is like a news-paper, a circumstantial narrative of different sacts, which succeed

fucceed one another without order or connection, some of which may concern you, though others may be impertinent; but then those which seem of no consequence to you may fuit the next man who takes him up; for his discourse never varies till he is impressed with new matter: in order to obtain which, he will, for the last hour the is with you, be as patient a hearer as he was before an eager speaker. And he will do by your discourse as you did by his, reject every thing as impertinent which does not answer his purpose; that is to say, every thing which is not a matter of fact which will bear to be related in the next company. Ask one of these men his opinion of any affair, what he thinks may be the cause? He knows nothing of that; that is no affair of his; the fact is fo, and he had it from fuch authority. Such a man as this neither speaks, acts, nor thinks; he only tells you what

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what others speak, act, or think; and has no more concern with any thing than the fountain has with the water which it throws up: he is the machine which brings it to you, but the source lies deeper down. Nothing embarrasses him so much, as the being confined in the country, or his chamber for a week: at his return to the world he has nothing new to tell, nobody will listen to what is old, his stock is gone, he is become a bankrupt, and must labour day and night for some new scraps of intelligence upon which to begin the world as a fresh.

One of these men, to whom I was totally unknown, paid me a visit this morning: after some little apology, which he seemed to have studied as he came along, and delivered with a very bad grace, he told me that he heard I belonged to the post-office, and

and therefore had taken the liberty to a ply to me to know if a letter had actually been received by the post, directed "To the King, with fpeed." I told him I was well affured there had not: because though I had nothing to do with the forting the letters, yet fuch a thing would have made too much noise for me not to have heard of it in the office. "Why then, Sir," replied he, "I must take my leave abruptly of you, for this story is univerfally believed, and I can neither eat nor fleep till I have contradicted it upon fo good authority."-- I make no doubt but that man would have thought the retarding the publication of a gazette extraordinary, which he knew the contents of before hand, as great a bleffing as Joshua did the retarding the course of the fun .-- It sometimes happens, though rarely, that one of these news-mongers has a little more genius than

is absolutely necessary for repeating what he hears: but this is only the worse; for as he knows no pain equal to that of being ignorant of any thing, whenever that is really the case, rather than appear so, he will call in his invention to his affiftance, and talk as fluently of things which he knows nothing about, as if he was ever fo well acquainted with them. The only difference is, that he usually talks with least diffidence about those things which he is most ignorant of, in order to preclude the least suspicion. A man of this cast is infinitely worse than a mere news-monger, for, when once the affectation of universal knowledge has feized a man, adieu to all the comforts of fociety! whatever be the fubject he is the fole speaker; he launches out into every art and science; takes a fory out of the mouth of another who had begun it, and tells it worse; has seen every thing, LETTER

thing; heard every thing; read every thing; he is never at a loss; tell him a piece of intelligence which you have that moment invented, he will tell you he knew it a week ago; tell him it is impossible, for that was your own invention, he will laugh and tell you he knew that too. You have nothing for it but to acknowledge you are weary of him, and leave him; and as soon as you are gone he will tell the rest of the company that you only made that a pretence for leaving them, and that he knows the business you are gone about. What a misfortune it is neither to have wit enough to speak, nor judgment enough to hold one's tongue!

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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SINCE my being settled in the city, I find that the inhabitants of two cities in different kingdoms hardly differ more from each other than the people I meet with here do from those I lest at the other end of the town. Each part of the town is a separate republic, and has, in point of society, its laws, its customs, and even its language; for not only the same words have different meanings in the different parts of the town, but many phrases which are current in every body's mouth at St. James's, are quite unintelligible on this side St. Paul's church: so that a man who distin-

distinguishes himself by his wit and vivacity in a city-affembly or coffee-house, is quite as much at a loss at an affembly in Sr. James's square, or a coffee-house in St. James's street, as if he was just arrived from a foreign country. He neither knows how to move nor stand still, to speak nor to be filent; he hears people talking and laughing on all sides of him, about things which he knows nothing of, and fo far from being able to put in a word, he hardly dares liften for fear of being guilty of an impropriety. Happy for him if his embarraffment is not discovered, or if he is not fensible that it is; for in a large affembly there will hardly be wanting fome one man vain enough of his own trifling knowledge, to expose the comparative ignorance of another; without confidering that was he by any chance to stray into the city, he would be just as much at a loss there, and from

an ignorance of the little occurrences, and local pleasantries, would appear in the same disadvantageous light: and then he might be very sure his city friend would not spare him: for if any thing can equal the contempt which a man of fashion has for a citizen, it is that which a citizen has for the man of fashion; only with this difference, that the man of fashion is uniform and consistent in his contempt, and that the citizen is so far otherwise that he attempts to imitate those very customs and manners which he affects to contemp.

Upon this account it happens, that it is very difficult to afcertain the bounds between the court and city, or to say where the precincts of one end and the other begin. There are some people, who from a connection and intercourse with both, can hardly be said to belong to either; for at the

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the same time that they refuse to be reckoned amongst the inferior order, the superior rank dispute their pretensions to being inrolled amongst them; and though they may be reckoned courtiers in the city, they must still be content with being citizens at court. A fifter or coufin marrying into a nobleman's family, has often given a young citizen fuch a hankering after quality, at the fame time that his business confined him to the city, that from an awkward mixture of connections, he has become ridiculous in both. An attachment to people of pleasure and diffipation in one place, and a prudent view to the main chance in another, oblige him to be a different man at different times; and it rarely happens that a man is fo good an actor as to lay aside one character and affume another so advoitly as entirely to prevent the one interfering with the other. It is not without some difficulty that the cautious

tious referve, the submissive bow, the obliging simper, the bob-wig of the tradefman, give place to the familiar eafe, the affured air, the loud laugh, the elegant drefs of the gentleman. It is also not very easy for a man to act with propriety in an affected character; and which ever way the natural disposition of a man of this cast is turned, he must run the risque of hurting either his credit in one place, or his politeness in another, without a certain proportion of hypocrify.-I have observed that a citizen rarely goes to court fo much for the fake of going there, as for the fake of coming from thence; it gives an authority to every thing he fays that day; every thing he reports he brought from thence; though perhaps all he heard there was a confused hum, and all he faw a lappet of the king's coat between the heads of a circle ten deep. And perhaps a courtier has bufinefs, fome

fome confolation in going into the city from complaining of the insupportable fatigue of doing business, though perhaps he had nothing more to do there than to write his name and receive a fum of money at the bank. All this is an affectation which spreads univerfally through all ranks of people. The court air is fo catching. that it is conspicuous even in the purveyors of fruit and the officers of the scullery: they wear their hair in a bag, and talk of places and pensions. The air of business is so catching in the city, that the fellow who fweeps out the hall at the bank, and carries coals into the offices, sticks a pen under his wig, and talks of the rife and fall of stocks. Each fet of men has its separate idea of perfection, to which every individual makes pretensions, either true or false. In the city the object is wealth; every man therefore affects to be thought a man of K bufiness.

bufiness, shrugs his shoulders mechanically when he hears of ill news from abroad, and endeavours to look grave or gay as the flocks rife or fall. Amongst the people in a higher rank of life, where the idea of perfection centres in birth and honours, every man endeavours to display those advantages which he thinks will bring him nearest to that idea. His hall is hung with tables of genealogy, his rooms furnished with portraits of his ancestors, as far back as they are likely to do him any credit: those of the collateral branches who have added to the honour of the house, are carefully preserved; but not a head, though the best that ever Vandyke produced, of any one who suffied the pure blood of the family by any connection with trade.-To have the ear of the king, to be the minister, to have interest with the minister's friend, and fo on, down to the hundredth degree,

are all, in their place, subjects of ambition, admiration and applause. A man who is bred up in a court, rifes and goes to reft, talks, thinks, acts with no other idea in his mind but that of advancing his interest, or rifing, perhaps without any determinate view, from one of these situations to the next in gradation: and it is according to this idea that he regulates his esteem, his respect, his civility, his indifference, his contempt, for every one round him. And no man wonders at this, no man condemns this, because it receives the fanction of universal practice; at least if it is condemned, it is only by those who have no hopes of fucceeding by it. -It is difficult to fay what qualifications are necessary to insure a man fuccess at court. Merit alone will not do it. Not that real merit, when it is discovered, is despised; but it is overlooked and forgot, except casual incidents draw K 2

it out to notice continually. Sometimes, by a concurrence of circumstances, a man may rife, not only without merit, but even by qualities which ought to have prevented his preferment: but then how often does it happen, that those very ill qualities which raised him, are the cause of his falling as fuddenly as he rofe. I cannot therefore find that either the moralist, who says virtue and a rectitude of conduct will always make their way; or the discontented person, who fays nothing but artifice and deceit can infure a man fuccess, are in the right. The court is an epitome of the world; it is not great parts, or a general rectitude of character that will infure fuccess in either; but a genius fuited to particular purposes, and an unwearied attention to times and circumstances; without which the most vicious and enterprising man cannot fucceed, and the most virtuous and **fleady**

steady man may fail. Virtue and vice, Henry, will meet with their rewards; but not in this life, till men are content in their notions, and uniform in their conduct : we may as well fay, till men are not men. his preferment; but then happen, that is it is very ill qualities which raifed him, are the cause of his falling as Suddenly as he rote. I cannot therefore that either the moralift, who fays virtue and a rectifude of conduct will always make their way a or the discontented person, who fays nothing but artifice and deceic can infore a man forcoss, are in the right. The court is an epitome of the world; it is not great parts, or a general reclifude of character that will infure fuccefs in either; but a genius feited to particular purpoles, and an unwearied attention to doidw word es Kig music LETTER the most victous and enterprifing man cannot succeed, and the most virtuous and

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ALTAMONT to CHARLOTTE.

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I Know of no character, whatever, so dangerous to society and so fatal to domestic happiness, as that of a man of gallantry, as he is called: which means a man, who without any regard to justice, friendship, or decency, endeavours to violate the honour of every woman whom he thinks worth his pursuit, whether married or single. This town abounds with wretches of this stamp, who have baseness enough to attempt the virtue of any woman, and vanity enough to hope to succeed. When once a man of intrigue has fixed his eyes upon a woman, be it the daughter or wife of his most intimate friend,

friend, he puts every art in practice to make his company agreeable to her: the most assiduous attention, the most flattering distinction, the most delicate civility must be employed to attract her notice; in public he will be always at her elbow, and in private he will be always contriving to make himfelf either useful or agreeable to her, or both, by forming parties which he knows are to her tafte, making her elegant compliments or trifling presents, running the town over to procure her any thing fhe has fet her mind on, giving her opportunities of displaying any accomplishments the may possess, and by commending her for them in the the most extravagant terms, make her thoroughly pleased with herself, which is no small step to her being so with him: till, by degrees, almost insensible, she will foon find that he is become more necesfary to her than she was aware of. And K4 all

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all this may be brought about without giving her the least alarm, from the extravagant love which even the most virtuous and modest women have for being admired. This may found, my Charlotte, like a piece of common-place fatire upon the town in general; but was you to fee, as I do every day, the pains which even virtuous women take to attract the notice of men, how disagreeable female parties are to them, with what a conscious pleasure they receive the civilities of an agreeable man, how little notice even the two dearest female friends take of each other when there are men in company worth attending to, and with what triumph they cannot help receiving those marks of regard which they are not at liberty to accept of, you would not think I judged hardly of them. How fine a field is here opened for a man of base principles and an enterprising genius! Where ment

Where can a woman, who suffers herself to be pleafed with addresses which she knows must either have no meaning or a bad one, fay the will ftop? The innocency of her own intentions is no security: a man is but little master of his trade, who cannot draw a woman on farther than the intends to go. If he is an adept, he will have brought her so near the temper of mind he wishes to have her in, even before the has the least suspicion of his intention, as will render it almost impossible for her to retreat. It may be faid that unmarried women may be deceived from the hopes of a man's addresses being of an honourable kind; and where this is his pretence, and there are no circumstances to contradict the probability of it, I would willingly allow the plea. But where is the young woman who confiders that? who is not pleased with the civility, the attach-Where ment

ment, the address of a man, not only whom the knows to have no intention, perhaps no power to marry her, but whom she knows, if it was to come to the point, she either could not, or would not, marry herfelf? And yet if he is an agreeable man, where is the young woman who would not think it a happiness to dance a whole night with him, and not only receive the highest pleasure from his attachment to her, but let him see that she does so. And then if a man has baseness enough to take advantage of a vanity of this kind, what woman can answer for herself that she will be proof against all the temptations which all the infinuating arts of an agreeable man may throw in her way? These are the circumstances which shew a man of gallantry in the light of a pest to society in regard to fingle women. With respect to married women he is ten times more so; because his bluga

his fuccess is not necessary to ruin the peace of a family; his attempts are sufficient. O my Charlotte, you may find I write with warmth upon this subject; I am indeed affected by it; all these resections have been suggested to me by a melancholy affair which I have been witness to, at the next house to that where I lodge; I will tell you the story, though I am not at liberty to mention the names of the parties concerned: sictitious ones will answer the purpose.

My next door neighbour, whom I shall call Phormio, was a young man of most excellent principles, a capital understanding, and the greatest sweetness of temper, though perhaps mixed with too much warmth, arising from a delicate sensibility. About a year ago he married the amiable Melissa; amiable in her person, her disposition, her manners: if any fault could

could be laid to her charge, it was the common foible, a fondness for being admired; early contracted from having been always the object of admiration. Never did any couple enjoy more real felicity than Phormio and Meliffa! which would probably have continued to the end of their lives, had not chance brought them acquainted with the gay, the agreeable, the deceitful, the abandoned. Lothario. Never man fet out with more dangerous qualifications for a man of intrigue than Lothario; fensible and polite in his behaviour, gay and lively in his manner, foft and infinuating in his address, he fung, he danced, he kept the best company, he knew all the agreeable topics of conversation, he gave his whole attention to women, and was indefatigable in his endeavours to please. He saw Melissa at an assembly in the city; he liked her, and determined to attack her. He had fome Was

fome little knowledge of Phormio, which it was no difficult matter for a man of his address to improve into an intimate acquaintance. A connection with a man of fashion, a member of parliament, a person of some consequence, was a circumstance not without its charms for a young man just entering into business in the city; and Lothario had the address to conceal the the basest designs upon the wife, under the mask of the highest friendship for the husband. He saw that his visits were far from disagreeable to Melissa, but the great freedom and openness of her behaviour to him, the unconftrained cheerfulness with which fhe treated him, which many a man, without his knowledge of the world, would have thought a circumstance in his favour, convinced him that he must act with the greatest caution; he saw the innocence of her heart and intentions; and fome

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was well affored, that nothing could give him fuccess, but the keeping her in ignorance of her danger, till he had secured her inclination without her knowledge. He found her only soible was vanity; upon that therefore he formed his most frequent attacks. His attendance upon her was constant at home, and in public he was sure to leave his own party to join hers.

A behaviour of this kind could not long be unnoticed; every one saw it, nor was it long before some officious friend hinted it to Phormio. Ten thousand circumstances then crouded into his memory to confirm the suspicion, of what was distraction to him to think of; every visit of Lothario's encreased it, and poor Melissa began to sink in her husband's esteem, not only before she deserved it, but before she had the least suspicion of its being so. Imagine the horror of Phormio's situation; uncertain

tain what to think or how to act; fearing to quarrel with his friend, lest his sufpicions should be without foundation; dreading still more to come to an explanation with his wife: and in this unhappy fituation did he continue watching for that proof which it would be death to him to find. Melissa, gay, inattentive, lively, and happy, saw not the situation of her hufband's mind. Lothario was the first that faw it, in spite of all his endeavours to conceal it. The artful are always fospicious; and as he was conscious that Phormio had reason to be alarmed at his conduct, he very easily saw that he was so. He had now no time to lofe, fo determined to feize the first opportunity of making his attack. Poor Meliffa was the only person totally ignorant both of the suspicions of her husband, and the deligns of her lover. One evening the danced with him at that very affembly

bly where he had first seen her. She received, with her usual cheerfulness, all the civil things he said to her, and got into her chair to return home, pleased with her evening's amusement, and happy in a conscious innocence of heart.

When the chair stopped at her door, she was not greatly furprised to see Lothario ready to offer his hand. He faid, as it was early he was come to eat a bit of cold chicken with her and Phormio, before he went home; and asked if her husband was at home? She said she believed so, as she had left him there with company. Phormio was not at home; he was gone to fup at the tavern with the company Melissa had left him in. A cold supper stood ready on the table against Melissa's return, and she and Lothario sat down to it. After supper Lothario began to pull off the mask, by addreffing ·用。

dreffing Meliffa in a strain of passion which he had never ventured to attempt before. The aftonishment which for a minute kept her filent, he construed in his favour, and pressed her earnestly to make him happy; he had caught her in his arms, and whilft the was struggling to disengage herself from him, the door opened, and gave entrance to the enraged Phormio. He had heard from the servant who let him in, that Lothario was above; the hour, their returning together from the affembly, joined to his former fuspicions, had raised him to the highest pitch of jealousy, and the attitude he found them in confirmed, as he thought, the truth of all he had suspected. He did not stand a moment in suspence, but drawing his fword, without speaking a word, he rushed with fury on Lothario, who had but just time to fnatch his sword from the chair he had hung it upon to defend himself. A fcuffle I.

scuffle ensued, in which Lothario had so much the advantage, that before the diftracted Melissa could summon the servants to part them, my poor, mistaken, injured unhappy friend received a wound which has fince brought on his death. Meliffa has been ever fince in a state of desperation, and it is much doubted by her physicians whether she will ever recover the use of her reason. The infamous Lothario has left his country; but as my poor deceased neighbour has some active friends, it is to be hoped that he will not fo eafily escape the hands of justice. - After considering the circumstances of such a transaction as this, with what horror and contempt must one look upon the gay men of pleasure who flutter about this town, watching every opportunity to feduce the unwary, and betray the innocent? O my Charlotte, how very wife was that man who faid, " whoso followeth

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loweth pleasure goeth after her as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

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LETTER XXIII

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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LAST night played at cards in the fame I fet with with a young lady, the elegance of whose figure was made more remarkable, by the profuse magnificence of her dress; but what rendered her still more so to me, was a melancholy air of discontent which was conspicuous in her whole behaviour, and which seemed but ill to agree with the gaiety of her appearance, and the apparent felicity of her fituation in life. I could not help enquiring who she was; and found that the was the only daughter of a gentleman of a small estate, and lately married to a man of the first rank, with a fortune vulgar equal

equal to it. This account rather increased my furprise, till I was informed that her husband was the least qualified of any man in the world to contribute to the happiness of an amiable woman. That he was in person, in understanding, in morals, the reverse of what every woman must wish in a husband; that she had been forced into the match, though her heart was not only averse to it, but had a strong prepossession in favour of another person, in a rank of life more upon a level with her own, and with whom she had had a long connection. I was no longer furprised at the melancholy which feemed to oppress her spirits. The heart which is susceptible of tender impressions, and elevated fentiments, will find the utmost splendor and magnificence a poor amends for the loss of all the lovely prospects of focial happiness. This is one of the fatal errors of L₃ vulgar laubs

vulgar minds, who fet out with an idea of money being the one thing necessary to constitute happiness; and claim a right of judging for others, from their own feelings. I dare fay the father of this young lady looked upon all the pleafing notions which she had formed to herself of social endearments and domestic happiness as nothing, in comparison of the joys she would find in a life of splendor and magnificence. Nay, he most probably condemned her way of thinking as romantic and abfurd; and applauded his own as rational and fenfible. He certainly would have great part of the world on his fide. But experience will convince us, if we confult it, that both he and they are in the wrong. Ask any of those people who have facrificed the hopes of domestic happiness to rank or affluence, and who have hearts endowed with virtue and tenderness enough to think it any facri-

fice, if they have not been disappointed in their views? If they tell truth, they will confess they have; they will own, that the gaiety and fplendor from whence they hoped for happiness, pall hourly upon their enjoyment; and that they have no farther hopes than to lose reflection in a croud of tedious amusements, which give them more fatigue than pleasure, but without which they know not how to exist. Ask them how they feel, when the least indifpolition makes them unfit for company? Ask them, when that indisposition increases into a fit of illness, what they would give for the attention, the confolation of an affectionate wife, or an indulgent hufband? Ask this very young lady's father how he would feel, if he found his fon-in-law gone to the opera, whilst his daughter lay at the point of death? And yet what elfe could he expect from a man whom he forced her

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to marry, without any claim upon him for his tenderness? There are people who might give up all hopes of domestic comfort, for the fake of rank or affluence, and lose nothing by the exchange; but then it is those who have neither virtue nor sensibility enough to feel what they lose; who from a meanness in their way of thinking, feek for happiness from the sources of pride and vanity, rather than from the dictates of nature and reason. The pleasures which nature dictates to men, are dependent on themselves, simple, domestic, and easy to be acquired; those which the imagination of men has framed, are dependent on others, restless, turbulent, difficult to be attained, and always fluctuating. The joys which fpring from focial endearments, and tender connections, are the pleasures of nature; the gratifications of ambition are of man's invention; as is plain from their being fo imperfect; 1038

perfect; for we have hardly obtained one wish, but we have formed another; which engroffes our attention too much to fuffer us to enjoy what we took fo much to possess. The common consent of men proves the fame thing. For, in effect, do we find one man who, fome time or other, does not acknowledge the truth of this ob-fervation, by retiring from a life of hurry and diffipation, to enjoy that tranquillity which a false notion of things made him contemn. After the imagination has wearied itself with an endless pursuit after that enjoyment which it could never find; and, od like Noah's dove, fluttered about from place to place, till it found no where to rest its foot; it returns at last to that calm and simple idea of happiness which nature at first dictated, but which experience alone could confirm the truth of. The misfortune is, that it is difficult to persuade men perfedury. that

that any happiness can be compleat, which is not conspicuous; the vanity of being the outward object of admiration, gets the better of the most exquisite inward sensations; and they are content to be less happy, provided they can but appear more fo. This way of judging is productive of much unhappiness to those who act upon such principles themselves; but it is infinitely harder upon those whom the authority of a father forces to act fo, though their principles are widely different. And yet, who can reason a man out of principles which take their rife from the very nature of his turn of mind, and which the general opinion of the world confirms him in, every day more and more? I make no doubt but the father of the young lady I mentioned, from a principle of interest, which he, and two thirds of the world, look upon as the highest mark of prudence, thought he was doing his duty

duty by his daughter, when he forced her to accept of a match which, in the language of the world, was infinitely better than the had any reason to expect. Nay, I dare fay, at this instant that he fees her unhappiness, he is so far from blaming himself as the cause of it, that he imputes it to her own obstinacy, and is convinced she might be happy if she would: so strangely has he confounded the ideas of riches and happiness with each other! But however men of his cast, from an affectation of wisdom, or a mistaken notion of prudence, may laugh at and condemn any attachment in young people, which may interfere with their interest, as romantic and ridiculous, they have neither nature nor reafon on their fide. A state of affluence is by no means effential to happiness; nor is it necessary that two people, who are happy in each other, must be miserable, even though ducy

though they have some difficulties to struggle with: but a state of perpetual discord, and mutual difguft, must rob any couple of every hope of comfort, even though the wealth of kingdoms was at their difpofal. Reason shews us why this should be the case, and experience and observation might convince us that it is fo. But in matters where prejudice and passion take the lead, neither reason nor experience can have any fway. Men never receive advantage from any one's experience but their own; the same bait which seduced the father will seduce the son; just as birds are caught in the same net in which ten thoufand other birds have been caught before them. Whoever is wife enough to pretend to think for himself, and to prefer reason to prejudice, will but run the risque of being thought a fool by the rest of the world; if he has courage enough to de**fpife**

though they have some difficulties to frug gnuogoa eid bard equal perpetual discording in it.

of every hope of comion, even though The Tyrian flaves, having revolted. and put all their masters to death, agreed amongst themselves to acknowledge him for their king, who should first discover the rifing fun. The whole multitude being affembled in a large plain, kept their eyes fixed steadily upon the east, with the most anxious expectation: one man only turned his back, and looked fledfaftly towards the west. You will easily imagine how the rest laughed him to scorn. Nevertheless he was the first who discovered the rays shining upon an high tower at a diftance before the fun had gotten above the horizon. From this little flory we may learn, my Henry, that the way to discover truth,

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is to turn our backs upon the multitude, and to observe their maxims only in order to act contrary to them. THE

Adieu. TAA

ALTAMONT.

Doubt not but you have been furprised at my long aleace. My bands have been full for these three weeks pash. I acknowledge the triple elaim which my sather, my ledge the triple elaim which my sather, my my attention, and you have not been a day out of my thoughts, thought I have not been able to space time shought to have the satisfaction of telling you so; but I know how ill an opinion you would nave of me, if I could not satisfact even that to the different who belongs to the same department man, who belongs to the same department in the office with myself, and with whom I have

is to turn our backs upon the multitude, and to observe their maxims only in order

LETTER AXIVINO DE O

ALTAMONT to HENRY.

London

at my long silence. My hands have been full for these three weeks past. I acknowledge the triple claim which my father, my Charlotte, and yourself, have upon me for my attention, and you have not been a day out of my thoughts; though I have not been able to spare time enough to have the satisfaction of telling you so; but I know how ill an opinion you would have of me, if I could not sacrifice even that to the duties of humanity. An unfortunate young man, who belongs to the same department in the office with myself, and with whom I have

have contracted some intimacy, has languished for near a month, under the torment of a broken limb, aggravated by a high inflammatory fever in confequence of it. I have not only had his business to superintend, but have been a constant attendant upon him: his friends requested it earneftly of me, as they imagined, from the regard he always professed for me, I might have fome influence over him, and that my remonstrances might, in some degree, get the better of that violent impatience of temper which ferved only to increase his diforder, and might possibly render all the skill and care of his physician and surgeon ineffectual. We have, at last, been so happy as to find our pains succeed; he is out of danger: possibly had he had a little more philosophy, or rather a little more religion, he had never been in any; for the fever was entirely the effect of his impatience, which

which threw him frequently into fuch agonies of passion, as well as pain, that nothing but my own fight would have convinced me could be possible, in a man of no common share of reason and understanding. But alas, my Henry, how does every day's converse with the world convince me more and more of the weakness of human reason, unsupported with the aid of religious principles! From whence is this impetuofity of temper which makes us as impatient under the evils we fuffer, as if by refifting we could conquer them? How is it that we are fo little fensible of our own weakness as not to find that the more we struggle against them, the more we feel their oppression? The impatient irritation of the mind does but increase its fenfibility, and ferves only to aggravate those misfortunes which a patient submisfion might, in some degree, alleviate. It

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is not the flubborn oak, but the bending willow which escapes the fury of the storm. It is not the proud obstinacy of the stoic. who finks under the weight of those torments which he will not acknowledge; but the meek fubmission of the Christian. which rifes superior to all the evils of this He. This notion is not new to me, however daily experience may confirm me in it. You well remember with what indignation I used to read the doctrines of the floic fect; how contemptible an idea it gave me of the pride of human nature, to fee men pretend to prove themselves insenfible of pain, when the very efforts which they exerted to bear it without complaining, fufficiently proved how much they were affected by it. The Epicurean, who efteems pleafure the only good, and pain the only evil, has, this world only confideted, nature on his fide: the Cynic, who fhuns

shuns the commerce of mankind from a detestation of their follies and vices, may, perhaps, have but too much reason on his fide: the Stoic alone, with all his boafted fuperiority, acts contrary both to nature and reason. Equally oppressed with the misfortunes incident to human nature with the rest of mankind, he alone shuts himfelf out from all hopes of comfort under them, by denying that he feels them. Suppose even that he has obstinacy enough to carry on the illusion with such constancy as to deceive the whole world, and make them believe that he is really invulnerable; nay, suppose for a moment, the heat of his imagination may go so far as even to impose upon himself; how quickly and how strongly must his own heart give him the lie, and the fenfibility of his nature reduce him to the state of a weak, fuffering wretch, groaning inwardly under M 2 the Burne

the bitterest anguish, with no other consolation than the thoughts of having deceived the world, and having made a strong effort towards deceiving himself! No, my Henry, pain is not to be conquered either by denying its power over us, or by combating it with impatience or complaints; they may aggravate, but can never alleviate. And yet where is the man, who does not think himself justified in his complaints, by the greatness of his misery? For a trifle he would be ashamed to complain; but when misfortune is heaped on misfortune he thinks his impatience becomes justifiable. In what can he be justified? In throwing off his reason, when he has most occasion for the exertion of it? No, furely; however hard it may found, the more a man is oppressed, the less ought he to give up to impatience, and even his complaints become less justifiable, in proportion as they can less avail him.

But, you will fay, is this idea of fortitude confistent with the weakness of human reason? No. You find, on the contrary, that the strongest efforts of human reason have reached no farther than a bare semblance of fortitude. But we have been taught a different system of patience; founded, not upon the pride of being thought incapable of fuffering, but upon a fense of the submission due to the will of our Creator, and a hope of one day reaping an inestimable advantage from it. This, and this only, is the confideration which can produce true fortitude, and an inward tranquillity which would shame all the outward pretensions of a stoic. The wifest of the heathen philosophers had no stronger argument for patience under evils, than the necessity of it, from their being unavoidable: we have an argument of much stronger force from the justice of him who inflicts them.

them. Theirs was the submission of a state to his master, who is patient because he sees the impossibility of helping himself; ours is that of a son to a father, who submits from a just sense of his goodness, and a conviction that he loveth every son whom he correcteth.

It is not the man who looks danger in the face without shrinking, who exposes himfelf to the fire of an army from the hopes of gain, or the point of a sword from revenge; it is not he who fears not God nor regards man, who has any claim to the character of fortitude. True fortitude goes not out of its way to meet evils, but whenever they come they are sure to find it upon its guard; it acts uniformly and constantly upon all occasions, and under all circumstances; and consists not in seeking danger, but in never sinking under missortunes; it acts upon one

one confistent principle, confidering a steady pursuit of virtue, as the only object of its attention, towards which, pain, fickness, poverty, contempt, are incidents by which its course may be obstructed, but never directed*; whatever obstacles it may meet with, it still presses forward, from a thorough conviction, that no path but that which leads to virtue can lead to happiness.

face without wind Adieu, who exposes him-

felf to the fire of an army from the hopes of TROMATIA Out of a fword from revenge;

* This is the fortitude which Corneille, in imitation of Seneca, has shewed in the character of Medea in the following passage.

it is not he who fears not God nor regards.

rean, who has any claim to the character

Nerine. Votre païs vous haït, votre époux est sans foy; Dans un fi grand revers que vous reste-t-il ? confile not in feeking danger, but in never

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mon eye; and by that means will make you laury an a Heot at no MATLA ation

of a thing, though you did not laugh at

THERE is no character which is so perplexing to a man but little acquainted with the world, and so difficult for him to understand, as that of a Man of humour. I should almost despair of making you comprehend what I mean by it, if that playful, folâtre disposition, which makes a part of the amiable character of our Charlotte, did not give me some assistance. A man of humour sees every thing in a grotesque light; and has the art of extracting ridiculous circumstances out of things which, to other people, would either pass unnoticed, or have a direct contrary effect.

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He never fees any thing in the gross, but directs his observation to the minutia, the trifling circumstances which escape a common eye; and by that means will make you laugh extremely at his representation of a thing, though you did not laugh at all at the original, because you then see it, not with your own eyes, but with his. One great fund of humour is mimicry, which depends entirely upon this nicety of observation; which enables the mimic to imitate that peculiar look which diftinguishes every individual man from all the rest of his species; which, by-the-bye, is not the phenomenon in nature the most easy to be accounted for *; and is the strongest instance in the world of the effect of what the French mean by je ne scai quoi, the Italians by non foche, the old Romans by nequeo dicere et sentio tantum, which abounds so

* Bouhours.

much through all the works of nature, that every nation has some phrase by which to express the same idea. It is in hitting off this fomething, that all imitative humour confifts: and it is not necessary for the original to be ridiculous, in order to make the copy so; because the effect is produced, by forcing you to attend to those circumstances which, in the original, either escaped your notice, or appeared in a different light. A dull tedious ftory which tired you to death in the original relater, would have a very different effect in the hands of of a master of humour: the drawling cadence, the tedious prolixity, with parenthesis hitched within parenthesis, till the thread of the story is cut into so many pieces, that you can neither find beginning nor end; all which in the original ferved but to put you out of all manner of patience, will have a contrary effect, and become nem

come truly comical in the imitation, delivered with an affected kind of tragi-comical gravity of face, which it is not in the power of an hundred laughers to diffurb. This arch gravity of face, which is neither absolutely real, nor absolutely affected, is the characteristic mark of a man of true humour: and is the circumstance which renders him fo perplexing to those who take every thing strictly according to the letter, either from having not the least dash of humour in their own composition, or from not having been accustomed to the kind of character. There is no character of more true sterling value towards forming the delightful parts of society than that of a man of true humour. The most common occurrences, in his hands, wear a lively afpect; wit receives a double poignancy, and even nonfense changes its nature and becomes entertaining. Let not the ferious man

man of profound wisdom, and accurate judgment, be startled at this position; let him not tell me that nonfense, in whatever garb it appears, must be nonsense, and as fuch must always disgust a sensible man; I must beg him to put up his ruler and compasses; true humour will only turn them into ridicule, and have all those on its side who are not too wife to be happy. If a man must always call in his reason upon every occasion, and view every object in so ferious a light as never to be pleafed without the strict leave of his judgment, he may never laugh as long as he lives. The cave of Trophonius, which the antients feigned to have fo extraordinary a property, that whoever went down into it never laughed afterwards*, has been explained as an allegory to represent serious reflection. Whoever reflects feriously upon the folly and

or elegan to # Fontenelle. Subai and it seein

mifery which furround him, and fees every occurrence in life through that medium, will find it a true cave of Trophonius to him. But reason does not oblige every man to visit this cave. In matters where duty is not concerned, wisdom itself will dictate to us to enjoy a pleasing surface, without examining what we may find under it. Wherever there are men there will be follies, and wherever there are follies they will be ridiculous; and the man who can give me the most picture que and entertaining view of them, will contribute to my happiness as much as the man who gives me a pleasure of a more serious kind. upon this principle, that a man of humour is so acceptable in every society; but, as the talents requisite to form such a character are rarely to be met with, and the demand for them is fo great in all companies; it has induced numbers of people to

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counterfeit them; and even not without fuccess; for, as it requires some knowledge of the true character to detect the counterfeit, they may have a chance of paffing current in nine companies out of ten. Of this counterfeit stamp are all those who have a certain collection of fongs and stories, which are fung and told every day with the same grimaces and the same fecond-hand imitation; a ftring of premeditated bons mots, which the company know by heart before they come; a number of rude catches, which have been laughed at from father to fon, for above an hundred years past; a laboured imitation of some odd noife, as the rumbling of a wheelbarrow, the creaking of a door, an apple roafting, a dog and cat fighting, &c. which the company call for by name and laugh at every time they meet. All thefe, and forty other instances of false humour, pass current

current every day with those who are so well disposed to laugh, that they want nothing but an object to laugh at: and the number of these is so considerable in this town, that there are clubs instituted for no other end than laughing; and the members of them meet every week, for no other purpose than to hear the same fongs, the fame stories, and the same jokes which they have laughed at every week for many years past, repeated in a regular rotation: and a person of any accuracy of observation can tell before-hand, the exact part of every fong or story where the company will all begin to smile, where the laugh will begin, where it will subside for a moment, and, at last, where it will burst out, and every body will clap their hands, and thump the table. If at any time the bumour of the company happens to flag, the introduction of a stranger amongst them to whom it has the least current

least chance of being new, enlivens it again in a moment: the eyes of the whole company are upon him, to watch how he is affected. If he feems in the least to enjoy it, they are delighted more than ever with it themselves; they clap their hands louder and longer, and thump the table with more vehemence, drink the stranger's health in a bumper, shake him by the hand, and call him the bonestest fellow !- But if he happens to have too much tafte for true humour to enjoy the counterfeit, their joy is damped, all their humour, as well as mirth, becomes forced, they attempt to explain it to him, curse him in their hearts for the stupidest fellow they ever saw, and as soon as he is gone fet up a horse laugh. think if any of those writers who have complained of the phlegmatic taciturnity of the English, were to be introduced to one of these societies, they would think the genius

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of the nation was altered; and that even amongst the English there are people to be found, who not only laugh at every thing, but at nothing 2. Fontenelle's story of the Tirinthians, which Rousseau b explains as a satire upon the levity of the French nation, is so much to the present purpose, that I cannot help giving it you here.

The Tirinthians, fays he, were so much given to laughing, that they could not be serious even about the most important matters. Every thing was in disorder amongst them; their debates in council were all about nonsense instead of the affairs of the public; every thing was turned into a farce. If they gave audience to an ambassador they made a joke of him; the speeches of the gravest senators were no-

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Julié. Note in lett. 17. par. 2, 191001 91943

thing but buffoonry; it was impossible for the Tirinthians to be grave or ferious upon any occasion whatever. They at last found fo many inconveniencies from this spirit of pleafantry, that they went to confult the oracle at Delphos, to find out fome means by which to acquire a little gravity. The oracle answered them, that if they could facrifice a bull to Neptune without laughing, they should recover their seriousness. A facrifice in itself is no such pleasant ceremony; nevertheless, that they might have as little as possible to disturb their gravity, they refolved to have no young people admitted; nor any old men but fuch as had some very painful disease, or were very much in debt, or had very bad wives. This curious company met upon the fea shore to perform the facrifice; and fuch was the genius of the nation, that in spite of diseases, debts, or wives, they were forced to hold

hold down their heads, compose their countenances, bite their lips, and take every precaution to prevent their laughing. By ill luck, a boy had slipped into the assembly, out of curiosity; and as some of them were turning him out, in compliance with the order, "What" cries he, "are you assaid I shall eat your bull?"—This speech undid the whole affair; they all burst into a fit of laughing; there was an end of the sacrifice; and the Tirinthians continue laughing on to this day.

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united; not at a old men but fuch as had finemently painful dicate, or were very pauch in debt, or had very baddyrives. This curious company met upon the feathore to perform the facilities; and fuch was the genius of the nation, that an ipite of differius of the various that an ipite of differited to say were forced to hold

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ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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any thing, as there is in all parts of the kingdom, but more particularly in the capital, about something which is called Liberty. The enthusiasm which prevails amongst all ranks and orders of men, about this darling privilege of an Englishman, this only support of our excellent constitution, this invaluable check upon despotism, this invaluable check upon despotism, this inestimable blessing, is amazing: and yet the general notions of it are so vague, that it has puzzled the wisest heads in the kingdom to define it. The late ingenious Dr. Brown has left us a treatise upon the distinction between

tween liberty and licentiousness; and has pointed out some marks by which to know the one from the other; according to which, it does not appear that there are three men in the kingdom who posses, and act up to a proper idea of English liberty. Another shrewd writer *, whose spirited remarks upon the conduct of his fuperiors raised him to the distinguished station of—the pillory; has defined it to be, according, at least, to the practice of the nation, " an hereditary right in every Englishman to do what he pleases himself, and to hinder his neighbour from doing the fame." And this idea feems entirely to correspond with the universal practice of the people I meet with here. The executive power, with regard I mean to public

vacua, that it has

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^{*} The author of the Marriage Ast, and Letters on the English Nation.

affairs, is lodged in fo few hands comparatively, that the rest of the world have no other way of exerting their liberty, but by finding fault with, and, as far as they are able, obstructing whatever measure they disapprove of; and that is, according to fome party or other, whatever measure is taken. The instant any thing is done, the torrent breaks loofe; not only the measure itself is condemned, but the person concerned is stigmatifed with the most insolent and groß abuse that can be imagined; not only his public but his private character is attacked in the most illiberal manner, and so blended with each other, that a man's being fond of horse-racing, or keeping a mistress, has been given, and received, as a reason for his voting for or against the laws of excise. This is the glorious liberty of the people of England!

Never was there in any age or country fo free a scope given to insolent abuse as there is in this kingdom at this day. People of the most distinguished rank, and most respectable characters, are exposed to the most gross indecency of language, and that by name, in every shop. Magistrates not only infulted, but obstructed in the execution of their office, by the most opprobrious language, and even by violence to their persons; noblemen of the first rank attacked in their own houses; persons of even a higher rank, made the fubjects of the most indecent ridicule; and even majesty itself exposed to the insolent clamours of a mob. This is the glorious liberty of the people of England! This is the state of liberty with regard to public affairs! And with regard to private life, the same idea of it, as extending not only to your own actions, but those of your neighbour, is **ftrictly** N4 Nevel

strictly kept up: for as every man claims a right of doing what he pleases in his own house, so his neighbour claims an equal right of finding fault with him, and abufing him for a fool or a madman if he happens to think differently from himself. And in this respect, one part of the principle so far counteracts the other, that the whole falls to the ground; for what I cannot do, without being cenfured and abused by all my neighbours, in effect I cannot do at all: fo that in private life the English have the least liberty to boast of of any nation The most private actions under the fun. of every individual, are not only pried into, and exposed with the most insolent impertinence, but misrepresented by ignorance or malevolence, and form a great part of modern entertainment. Whoever thinks to exert the liberty of a man, and act upon the principles of reason, without asking

ing leave of the people who furround him will find himfelf much miftaken. the custom, is a sufficient answer to any man who is the least particular in his conduct, and a sufficient reason for exposing him in print or upon the stage. The satirist now no longer exposes vice or folly, but fuch a person or such a person, by name, whom be takes to be either vicious or foolish. It is upon this principle that the works of the late celebrated fatirist Churchill are fo much admired and read; as a poet, he has nothing to recommend him but an easy versification, and sometimes a strength of expression: almost every thing he has produced is imperfect, defultory, unconnected: he has fometimes not only flung his thoughts together at random, without any reference to his subject, but has even written poems without any precise subject

at all; but he deals largely in infolent. abuse of private characters, frequently without justice, always without decency; his raillery is railing, and his fatire for the most part such as passes between two incensed porters in the street. What wonder then that he is read with eagerness in an age and nation where private scandal and personal defamation are the prevailing pasfion? And that they are fo, the extensive fale which works of that tendency meet with, and the crouds which Mr. Foote's personal comedies draw together, are a sufficient proof. In short, in this capital, every man must expect to have his most private affairs canvaffed with as much freedom as if they were of public concern; every man erects himself into a judge of his neighbour's actions, and condemns, and

and (as far as abuse and ridicule will do it) punishes him for them, with a most arbiwithout juffice, always withyirodiw his raillery is railing and his faire for the most part luch as passes between two in-THOMATAA IN the Breef, What wonder then that he is read with elegaricis in an age and nation where private fraudal and personal delagacion are the prevailing palfion? And that they are los the extensive fale which works of that rendency meet with, and the ciouds which Mr. Foote's personal comedies draw together, are a fuffixient proof, the disort, in this capital, devery man mulit expect to have his most private afture rangalish with as much freedom. as if they tween of poblic concern; do enboi a otal delmid eftere ETTER s orighbour's actions, and condemns, and

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fear of a certain putithment is to far fupe-ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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"T WONDER" says a sensible officer I to me one day, "that a man is not afraid to be a coward." However particular this notion may appear of conquering fear by fear, it is by no means unnatural, if we confider the evils that cowardice subjects a man to. To say nothing of the actual punishments which are the consequence of it in a military life, the very love of glory and dread of infamy, fo natural to all men, and particularly to the subjects of a free state, would, I should imagine, be sufficient to make the fear of forfeiting the one, and incurring the other, fupe-CLeures Perfances

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fuperior to that of death itself. In states where the life of the subject depends on the will of the fovereign, we find that the fear of a certain punishment is so far superior to that of a precarious death, that their troops rush into danger with a kind of stupid insensibility, which stands in the The case is different place of courage. with regard to the subjects of a free state; the idea of glory creates a kind of fear in them, but it is not that of punishment, but that of infamy; and a jealoufy of being exempted from that share of glory and reputation which it is in their power to acquire. It is upon this principle that Montesquieu observes *, that "you may lay it down as a general rule, that the defire of glory encreases and diminishes with the liberty of the subject." In any free state, but more especially in a republic, every

^{*} Lettres Perfanes.

man is more or less concerned in the welfare of the state, and consequently every man has the fatisfaction, by his fingle arm; of contributing more or less to the happiness of all his fellow subjects; for which, wherever his valour is known, he is fure of receiving his proportion of reputation. The case is far different in an army of flaves; a cold attention to the capricious will of their fovereign, without any hope of reward to enliven it, would never rouse them to action: the fear of punishment may do it; but then the same fear, when they are in the hands of the enemy, will induce them to turn their arms against their country, without the least remorfe: nay, the least hope of favour from the enemy, must at any time make them revolt. as they can but endure their flavery; and, like Æsop's ass, they have no fear that the enemy will lay two pair of panniers upon their nonsd back.

back. The defire of glory therefore, which is the highest fecurity to the state, is inseparably connected with freedom; and is carried to fo great a height, that it becomes an effential qualification for any man who wishes to escape universal contempt; provided, I mean, that he is at all thrown into the active scenes of life. And upon this principle we can eafily explain my friend's notion of being afraid to be a coward; and even comprehend the possibility of a coward being fo far wrought upon by the fear of infamy, as to perform the part of a brave man. For, if we trace the generality of what are called brave actions to their original, we shall oftener find them taking their rife from a defire of reputation than any other motive. All men of a liberal way of thinking are fond of being well spoken of; and nothing can recommend a man fo effectually to the notice and approbation buck

bation of so many people, as private courage exerted in a public cause. And here the diffinction is fo delicate, between the fatisfaction arising from the thoughts of having been ferviceable to a whole nation, and the applause due to that service, that it is hardly to be comprehended. Those writers who deduce every action from a felfish motive entirely, are perhaps too much on one fide of the question; they who refolve all heroic actions into fuch an enthusiastic public spirit, as entirely excludes all regard to felf, are perhaps too much on the other. Let us ask the first, whether they have not an idea of some internal satisfaction arifing from a consciousness of having done a good action, even though it never should be known? If they fay that internal fatisfaction, and not the goodness of the action, was the motive upon which it was performed . I fay the distinction is

fo refined, as hardly to be comprehended; but if what they fay is true, felfishness, in that case, is a virtue. Let us ask the latter. whether they do not think, that a love of glory, is in many respects more predominant, than a bare regard to duty? Suppose, as a French philosopher observes, any one had had authority to fay to Curtius, just as he was going to plunge into the gulph, "it is your duty to throw yourself in, but be affured no one shall ever mention a word of you, or your death," believe me, he had turned his horse about. This will always be the case, in those remarkable inftances of heroifm which lift a man up to the view and admiration of a whole nation, or perhaps the whole world; there the reputation supersedes the duty. In common life, in those instances of goodness, which, if they are known, can only procure a man the applause of half a score persons.

perfors, duty may have its weight, and reputation be entitely left out of the queftion. 3 And by this means, I think, we may compromise the matter, between those who attribute every action to a felfish motive, and those who allow it no weight in any: the former are generally in the right, with regard to those people who defire to go beyond their duty; the latter, with regard to those who content themselves with endeayouring to act up to it. And it is very easy to discover whether a man is actuated by a regard to duty or reputation. Whenever you fee a man virtuous, as it were, by habit; who does good actions, as if it was impossible for him to act otherwise; and whose virtue sits so easy upon him, that he hardly feems to know that he has it; depend upon it that man acts upon a principle of duty. On the other hand, when you fee a man who makes fuch a parade of his good-LETTER ness,

who condemns all the rest of the world; and who seems to demand your respect, because he does not render himself worthy of your abhorrence; you may safely suspect that that man only chuses to appear virtuous, because he thinks it the easiest way to procure reputation. And the same rules by which you may discover true virtue, will help you to the knowledge of true courage: for whenever you see a man make an unnecessary parade of his valour, you may safely conclude that he acts upon sale principles, and would be a coward if he dared.

impossible for usibA o act otherwise; and whose virtue sits to easy upon him, that he upon it that man acts upon a principle of duty. On the other hand, when you see a man who makes such a parade of his good-man who makes such a parade of his good-nates and con a parade of his good-nates.

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LETTER XXVIII.

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honoured Sir, the justice of your reproach for having made it necessary for you to remind me of my promise, of paying my duty to you this spring. You also are no less just than kind in saying that you know my not having hitherto performed my promise, arises neither from want of assection for you, nor a desire to see you: you may therefore well be surprised at my not saying a word about it in any of my letters. The truth is, I have had, and still have my hands so full of business, that it is not possible for me to six the time which

which I long for with more eagerness than you can suppose; though the goodness of your own heart is fufficiently inclined to do justice to the integrity of mine. I am at present employed in the furnishing a house which I have lately purchased, not far distant from this capital, and establishing my little houshold; all which I must finish before I take my journey, for a reason which, I imagine from the hint at the close of your last letter, you will have no difficulty in finding out. Believe me, Sir, in the midft of all the new scenes, and various company that I have been thrown into, my heart could as foon have forgotten its duty and affection to you, as its attachment to my Charlotte: and if I have hitherto been filent upon that head, it has not been from any wavering which I found in my own disposition, but from a desire of convincing both her and myfelf that I was worthy her 03

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acceptance, before I offered myfelf to her. Could I venture to affure her of the integrity of a heart, with which I was but ill acquainted myself? My life has, hitherto, been wholly in extremes: for the greatest part of it I have been only conversant with men in their most simple state, just as they came from the hands of nature : in this flate your wife instructions easily gave me a love for virtue, which, joined to an ignorance of temptation, made me think it impossible for any man, who had the use of his reason, to swerve from his duty. The notice of my generous patron, has all at once hurried me into the opposite extreme, and introduced me to all the mifguided wisdom, and all the dangerous refinements of the most polished society. My own genius, be it more or less, is all I have to trust to, for a knowledge of the intermediate flates between these two extremes; and for

for such observations upon men and manners as will best help me to a knowledge of myself. Till I became conversant in the more active scenes of life, I was almost a stranger to the influence of the passions. could not believe, till I faw hourly instances of it, that a man could know what was right, and act what was wrong. I could not believe, till I felt it, that it required no weak efforts to make reason exert itself. when passion endeavoured to lull it to sleep: much less could I believe that passion itself could plead in so artful a manner, as almost to draw reason over to its side: but I found that, and found it a finesse, which even the wifest man must stand in fear of. A wife man will never fear the influence of passion, when it acts in direct opposition to reason; the least exertion of the will de-Aroys its empire: but when it acts so artfully, rather than powerfully, as to draw 04 him TOF

him in to commit what he will hereafter find was wrong, without knowing it, his wildom may then only serve to help him to the discovery when it is too late. These are truths which I had not the least conception of, and which nothing but experience could have brought me acquainted with. Neither books nor reflection, I find, can help a man to a knowledge of the human heart: the game of life contradicts the obfervation with regard to all other games; a man must be an actor in order to be a good spectator; a stander-by can know but little of the matter. A contemplative philosopher may acquire a barren love for virtue; but an active philosopher will acquire a higher relish for it, by seeking every opportunity of advancing its interests: the first may make his name famous by writing good books; the latter will make his memory dear by doing good actions of In this

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this rank may I be placed; but let me not be placed alone: the contemplative man may with to confine his attention to himfelf; the active man will rather feek to enlarge his fphere of action, by encreasing his duties. Let me not lose one attachment before I have formed another; let not the unhappy day which deprives me of the opportunity of performing the duties of a fon, exclude me at once from all exercise of the focial duties: let me rather look forward with eagerness to the time when as a hufband, a friend, a father, I may advance my own happiness in that of every one round me. Can any fituation be more miferable than that of a man who is daily lofeing those attachments which made life dear to him, without having formed any others to supply their place? The course of a few years leaves him without relations, without friends, without attention, except 21117 what

what is hewed him from an interested view, his old age is comfortless, and his death unlamented on the other hand, vif enlarging our connections does encrease our duties; does it not, at the same time, afford us fatisfactions which nothing can attone for the want of? Where are that difinterested affection, that heart-felt sympathy, that boundless confidence, that mutual participation of joys and griefs, which constitute true happiness, to be met with, but in the endearing ties of hufband and father? These are ideas of happiness which men without fensibility may not comprehend, men of libertine principles may laugh at; but how sweet is the repose of that man who lies down with the comfortable reflection of having passed the day in a regular performance of the duties of an affectionate husband, a tender father, or an attentive fon! These are the duties of nature; and these are the duties LETTER

It is with these views that I have offered my hand to the amiable Charlotte, and that I wait with the utmost impatience for liberty to attend upon you and her. I have written to her upon the subject *, with that openness and unreserved freedom with which I desire to mark every action of my life; and expect an answer agreeable to the goodness of her heart, which is equally a stranger to deceit and affectation. Adieu, my ever honoured Sir; and believe that I look upon the performance of my duty to you, as the foundation of all my hopes of happiness in every other connection.

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ing passed the day in a regular performance response of the duties of an enectionare numband, a sender sather, or an attentive son! These are the are the duties of nature; and these are the satures.

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ing nobnother shape. The simplicity of her VOUR last letter gave me sensible pleasure: if I have the power of adding to the happiness of you or yours, believe me I would not exchange it for that of prime minister; any more than I would the two letters which I have received from your worthy father, and his amiable daughter, for letters patent for a dukedom. Yes, my friend, I shall be happy, in the most extensive sense of the word; the possession of fuch a heart as my Charlotte's will eftablish my happiness upon the most folid foundation. A fincere love for her, will necessarily include a love for virtue. To Can there then

there be a greater incitement to virtuous actions, than a constant desire to give pleafure to a virtuous person? A constant attention to her happiness will insure the future rectitude of my conduct; and I shall have the higher regard for virtue from feeing it in her shape. The simplicity of her manners and the purity of her fentiments being constantly before my eyes, will lead me to imitate them; for I am persuaded that did we but know how infentibly we copy the manners of those who stand high in our esteem, we should pay a greater regard to the choice of our connections than we are apt to do; those, I mean, of an intimate and lasting kind. We are not more partial to the persons of those we love, than we are to their fentiments; we infenfibly adopt their principles, as well as their man ners, and even catch their air, and the tone of their voice. Of how much confequence then chere

then is it, to form connections with fuch perions as it may be a glory to imitate? And in this respect, I am convinced I shall have every reason to be satisfied with my choice of a companion. A goodness of heart will necessarily produce a propriety of conduct. As to what you feem to hint about an ignorance of the customs of the world, a deficiency in those little ceremonies which are necessary in an intercourse with other people; believe me, there is nothing to be feared on that head. Wherever your lifter is known, the will never appear ridiculous, but in the eyes of those whom it would be no credit to please. A constant desire to be agreeable, is almost the only thing necessary towards being fo; and a sweetness of disposition will produce a natural politeness, of infinitely more value than an affected one: the one is the original of what the other does but ill imitate; the utmost extent of whole power propie

is only to make a person appear outwardly, what he ought to be in reality. True politeness confists in neither doing, nor faying any thing which may give another pain; nor omitting any thing which may give him pleasure: with how much greater force does a goodness of heart, attentive to the felicity of every one, produce the same effects? Politeness may conceal the defects of a bad heart; a good heart has nothing to hide. I may perhaps appear particular in what I am going to fay, an early prejudice in favour of nature, however unpolished, may have given my mind a wrong bias; but I do not know whether, amongst the women I have been here conversant with, I have not oftener been offended by an excess of what is called politeness, than a deficiency of it. I mean that politeness and affectation are so near akin, that the one is perpetually mistaken for the other. people

people who are conversant in polite life; feel fuch a delire of appearing well-bred, as makes them not trust enough to a natural behaviour. Observe even the most sensible and truly polite people in a tête-à-tête, and in a circle, and you will find a difference in their tone of voice, their gait, their manner, that shews that though their behaviour may be always easy, yet it is not always natural; nay, that very eafe which characterises true politeness, is not always the effect of nature: it is sometimes as much put on as a contrary behaviour; and when that is the case, if it is not managed with great judgment, it is apt to approach very near to rudeness. It is from this want of judgment that politeness and affectation are fo often confounded with each other. How many women do I fee every day, who in their closets, or even in their own families, are natural, easy, and agreeable; and min

and yet no fooner do they come into a mixed company but they become difgusting, by the pains they take to be well-bred? In short, the farther we deviate from nature, the farther we shall be from our aim, of being agreeable. Nature may be ornamented, but must never be hidden. We never fee any thing shocking even in the most rustic behaviour of the rudest peasant; nature however unpolished has nothing difgufting: the affected politeness of a dancing master, who steps and looks by rule, gives us the utmoit difgust and contempt; because it is the greatest deviation from nature that can be; the easy deportment of a gentleman gives us the highest pleasure; because it is still nature, and nature dressed to the best advantage. When once, therefore, a person enjoys the happiness of a good natural disposition, a very little practice in the customs of the world will enable him Brig

him to appear in an advantageous light; but without this one necessary qualification, politeness will be but a better fort of affectation, and a harmless species of hypocrify. It is upon this principle that I am convinced that my Charlotte will be always amiable in her manners, because she will always act according to the dictates of nature: for the same observation which Diderot makes with regard to theatrical works, may be applied to the manners of real life; "O mon ami, que la simplicité est belle! Que nous avons mal fait de nous en eloigner!"

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amiable in her mannets, because the will

Am pestered to death by a man who distresses me with his friendship, and kills me with kindness. He is of that order of men who know every thing so well, that they think nothing well done but what they are concerned in; who take a thing out of your hand and say "let me do it", and do it worse. If I shew him any thing I have done he finds fault with it, and tells me of something of the same kind which he saw, perhaps at Rhodes; if I tell him of any thing I am going to do, he will put me in a method, which I must pursue, whether I like it or not, on pain of

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being thought a very obstinate fellow that will not be advised; and being told, every time I fee him, that if I had taken his advice it would have been very compleatly done: this man thinks he has found out that, though I may know fomething of books, I am very ignorant of the world; for which reason he imagines he is performing an act of friendship, in teaching me how to give orders for fitting up a room, or how to choose a paper for my stair-case. If we happen to differ, even in the choice of a colour, he tells me, that which he prefers is by far the most fashionable, and quotes some house, perhaps at an hundred miles distance, as an instance. He knows every new house in town, and every new carriage, and who were the principal workmen concerned in building or ornamenting them: and knows how to talk to each of them in their own language; has all their terms

terms by heart; and this he calls a knowledge of the world. He thinks no man can have talte that does not know how to express his meaning in terms of art. He may as well think that no man can love pictures who is not a painter. Knowledge no more confifts in terms than science does in language; and yet upon the strength of knowing the common terms used in the different arts, he fets up for a compleat connoisseur. Whatever be the matter in question, he either can do it, or knows how it should be done, better than any man in England; and therefore claims a right of finding fault with every thing that is not done by him or by his direction. This man may paint, another draw, another build, another shoot, another fish, another ride, another dance, another leap, another fing, another play, and all very well; but if they would all condescend to take his advice he could P 3

terms

could put them in a method which would greatly improve each of them in his performance. He has unfortunately dabbled a little in polite literature, and will tell you that Mr. Pope was no poet, that Shakefpeare wanted learning, and Johnson genius; and will support his affertion by a fingle line out of each. He is the first to join in the cry against Homer, which the modern French critics, and after them some of our own, feem fo fond of; though I think he never read more of his works than the two first books of the Iliad which he was whipped through at school . If he allows er pour quot. Fontenelle in lea great of his works bretends to barlefque his

The contempt which the works of Homer have, of late years, met with, after having been the admiration of so many ages, is what every one the least conversant in the literary world cannot help taking notice of From the time of Zoilus, of carping memory, Homer enjoyed an uninterrupted series of admiration, so enthusiastic that even they who could not always approve

a great share of genius to any one, it is some obsolete writer that few people know any thing of; or else some friend of his own, who, poor fellow, is dead. He is a

teargMr. Pope was no poet, that Shake-

approve did not dare condemn, for several hundred years. Some critics, during the polifhed age of Augustus, found some things in him which they could have wished otherwise. Cicero ventures to say that he wishes Homer had rather given the qualities of gods to men than the passions of men to gods: but this is only a flight hint thrown out with all deference to the dignity of Homer. The modern critics use him with less ceremony. La Bruyere mentions those in his time who had a contempt for Homer, but he seems to fay it was fans trop scavoir pourquoi. Fontenelle in feveral parts of his works pretends to barlefque his grandeur, and dispute his title to universal esteem. In his Dialogues des Morts, he introduces one between Homer and Æsop, in which he ridicules the notions of those who maintained that all the secrets of theology, philosophy, morality, and even the mathematics, were comprised in the works of Homer. He there, as well as in another place, exposes the abfurdity of PA making approve

great reader of the monthly criticisms, and could he find time, or fit still long enough, would undertake a part in the execution of one of them, as it would afford him the naid now you may award award to finest

making the gods subject to like passions with men, and even with very weak men: in both places he mentions the ridiculous circumstance of Mars, who being wounded by Diomede, cried out as loud as nine or ten thousand men, but did not act like one; for he ran away to Jupiter to complain of the injury like a child. And in many other instances he makes very free with the dignity of the divine poet. Montesquieu, in the Lettres Persanes, mentions a violent dispute between two parties in a coffee house upon the degree of merit to be allowed to Homer, so that we find at that time he was by no means regarded as infallible, even by all his admirers. Voltaire, in his poem of La Pucelle d'Orleans, is not very sparing of his ridicule or even abuse of Homer. He calls him

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Que tout favant, meme en baillant revere;

and speaks ludicrously of his summoning his heroes to dinner; nay, he has given us some bombast lines; which

finest opportunity of finding fault that can be imagined: but he has too much business upon his hands. He is at present, I thank him, employed in laying out my garden. I have shewn him my own plan for it, which I knew before-hand he would have a thousand objections to:—I have heard even more than I expected, which he will not bear to have answered, so I shall hear his scheme, and execute my own with all possible expedition. I dread to

which he stiles dans le vrais gout d'Homere.—All these instances serve to prove that, whether from an increase or decrease of taste, I cannot pretend to determine, the authority of Homer is certainly upon the decline. And I make no doubt that we may live to see him entirely banished from our seminaries of learning; especially as an author of our own, at that time sellow of a learned society, goes so far as to declare, that there is only one line in Homer which ever gave him any pleasure, and that he believes the beauty of that was more owing to chance than design.

tell him I am going to be married, for fear he should endeavour to put me out of conceit with my wife even before he sees her. He already tells me my house will not be at all in the modern fashion: perhaps he may tell me the same with regard to my wife; and I shall most fincerely hope he may be in the right. But I hope before that time the pains which I take to affront him, by never following his advice, must succeed; for I cannot but look upon his friendship as one of the most troublesome misfortunes of my life, and should esteem the loss of it as a very valuable acquisition. A senfible man feldom gives his advice till it is asked; because he thinks it unlikely that you should be ignorant of what he is so well acquainted with: a weak man thinks he is doing you a great favour, in pretending to teach you what he has but the moment before been taught himself, and is disappointed LETYTER

A sensible man shews you his plan, and leaves you to find out how far it may be better than your own. If he condemns any thing, he does it modestly, and gives you his reasons for it; but this requires some attention and discernment: the shortest way is to condemn every thing in the gross with a decisive manner, and leave you to give your reasons for being of a contrary opinion. But from such a man, nothing but being consined in the same prison, or shut up in the same stage-coach, should prevent my slying as I would from a rattle-snake.

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he is doing you a great favour, in pretending to teach you what he has but the moment before been taught himfelf, and is dif-SATTAL appointed felf, if we confider the different lights in which we see her course. All these changes

LETTER XXXI.

of taffe, which must affect the works of imagina YANAH OI TROMATIA, of all

the antients; which must lose their beauties,

You ask my opinion with regard to the contempt which many modern critics affect to shew for the works of Homer, which I hinted at in my last letter. In some respects I believe it may be affected; but in others, I think there are many reasons why it may be real; and perhaps not without some soundation. If we compare the age in which Homer wrote, with that wherein we live, we shall find that almost every circumstance coincides to form a difference of taste and sentiments. Every thing is changed; theology, policy, morals, manners, philosophy, even nature itself,

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felf, if we consider the different lights in which we see her course. All these changes must necessarily produce a change in point of tafte, which must affect the works of imagination, not only of Homer, but of all the antients; which must lose their beauties. in proportion as the manners to which they allude become unknown, or their notions unnatural. The heathen mythology allowed fo great a latitude for improbable fiction, and the mixture of gods and heroes makes so incomprehensible a confusion, that what in earlier ages was thought grandeur and sublimity, with us assumes a ridiculous aspect: and instead of being pleased with the relation of gods espousing the quarrels of men, fighting for them in person, and directing the course of their darts; we are either shocked, or tempted to laugh at the folly of it. If you rob the ancients of their mythology, you rob them of all their

their poems. The Iliad might as well exist without Agamemnon or Achilles, as without Jupiter and Theris : the Odyffey might as well part with Ulyffes as Minerva; and Venus is just as necessary even to the Aneid as Aneas himfelf. How then is it possible that these poems should maintain all their title to admiration, in an age wherein their principal beauties and most interesting circumstances are regarded as an heap of abfurd fiction, which has not even nature or possibility for its foundation. Another reason why the ancient poets must lose much of their beauty with us, is that the manners they describe are too rude to give us any pleasure in the representation. The refined polish of the present age gives an air of brutality even to the virtues of the ancient heroes. We regard with horror a conqueror dragging the naked body of his conquered enemy at his chariot wheels; the courage of

of Achilles is lost in his inhumanity; and the strength of his friendship for Patroclus lofes its merit, from the brutality of his revenge. And how ridiculous a contrast is there between this part of his conduct, and the childish prayer which he makes to his mother to drive the flies away from the body of his friend Patroclus! If it is objected that Homer meaned not to draw a character but to represent natural manners; we may answer that what was nature then, and pleafed upon that account, is not nature now, and of course must disgust rather than please. Even the groffness of the language with which the heroes of antiquity treat each other is a circumstance by no means pleasing to modern civility. It is no mark of bravery in the hero to call his antagonist "dog's face," and to revile him with the groffest terms of abuse; any more than it is of elegance in the poet to imagine fuch a circum-

circumstance. But the age in which Homer lived, was not that in which either heroes or poets facrificed to the Graces. The fairest claim which Homer seems to have for admiration, feems to be founded. in respect at least of his stile, upon the beautiful fimplicity of his allufions to natural objects in the inanimate or brute creation. And even here the experience of the present age, though it cannot lessen the intrinsic value of his simplicity, will prevent its being so strikingly pleasing, by its being less new. A comparison from the fun, the moon, a storm, a whirlwind, a wolf, a flock of goats, &c. will be natural, but from frequent use will not be affecting: at least to the generality of readers. Experience has rendered the modern ages of the world fo refined, that simple nature is overlooked; and it requires a corrected imagination, and a chastised taste, to be formed

be pleased with simplicity. So that, with regard to forming a judicious tafte, we may be faid to leave off where we might have been supposed to have begun; namely in a relish for the beauties of simplicity, which the more glittering attractions of false taste drew off our attention from, till experience enabled us to fee through the deceit. We may illustrate this observation, by applying it to the science of music, as well as poetry. A person who is but little versed in music will find but little relish for the simple melody and natural harmony of the ancient composers; if we may venture to stile those so, who wrote not much more than an hundred years before our own time. Such a piece of composition for instance as " the filver fwan" of Orlando Gibbons, which you are fo well acquainted with, appears cold and insipid to a smatterer in music, though to a musician whose judgment is od formed

formed upon experience, it must appear to abound in the most affecting strokes of beautiful simplicity. The judgment, after having been led away by the glitter of a profusion of ornament, or depth of contrivance, returns, as it were diffatisfied, to that simplicity, which must always please, from its connection with nature. But then ir must be the judgment of an adept that becomes thus refined; who is able to compare the real beauties of simplicity with the affected ones of art: and it is upon this principle that I say even the most striking natural beauties in Homer's poetry must lose their effect with the generality of read-But the most striking beauty of Homer, and what I think no critic can refuse to acknowledge the merit of, is the animated strength of his characters; which, however, he may fometimes fail in supporting them with confistency, must have its

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its effect upon every reader of hippore there can be no reader to philegmatic as not to feel himfelf affected by the spirit of Achilles, the imperuolity of Ajax, the intrepidity of Diomede, the venerable wifdom of Neftor: much less can any be fo void of feeling, as not to compaffionate the unhappy situation of the old king Priam. I should have an ill opinion of that man's humanity, who could read the speech which Priam makes to Achilles to befeech him to give him the body of his unfortunate fon, without being strongly affected Diderot, one of the greatest masters of nature which the French nation ever produced, has given this speech of Priam, and his lamentation after the death of Hector. as instances of the most pathetic simplicity that ever were written: and concludes with observing "what is there in these speeches? Nothing ingenious, no contrivance, nothing

heart, they at this thing but fuch noble truths told with fuch fimplicity, that every one is apt to think he could have faid the fame as Homer. Let us, continues he, who know the difficulty and the merit of simplicity, read these pasfages, consider them well, and then throw all our papers into the fire, Le génie se sent, mais il ne s'imite point."

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Upon the whole therefore it appears to me that the poems of Homer, at the time he wrote them, abounded with an infinity of beauties both natural and artificial. With regard to those of an artificial kind, a total change in religion, morals, politics, and manners, has made us fee them in fo different a light that their original merit is loft, and they may be faid, as it were, to have died of old age. With regard to those of a natural kind which have their foundation in the operations of nature, and in the workings

workings of the human heart, they at this day remain in their full force, to every feeling and intelligent reader. And it is in these beauties that the poets of our time ought to imitate him and the ancients in general. But unfortunately they generally endeavour to do it in the more striking effects of art. Can any thing be more abfurd than to fee the machinery of a modern poem turn all upon the ridiculous fables of the heathen mythology, except it is an unnatural and almost impious mixture of facred and profane history in the same subiect? Nature and reason ought always to guide us in works of imagination; and it is just as absurd to regulate our poems by the laws and customs of the ancients, as it would be to govern the kingdom of England by the laws of Sparta. If our modern poets will imitate the ancients, it should be in conforming, as they did, to the manners Posion in the ope 8. Que of nature, and in the

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of their own times, for we may venture to affirm that Homer never had been the poet he was, if he had conformed to the morals and described the manners of a people who lived a thousand years before him. But even our best poets, from a servile imitation of the ancients, have neither known how to get rid of the custom of introduceing fuperior beings into their poems, nor yet how to make a proper use of such as they could be justified in introducing in this enlightened age of the world : infomuch that Milton, by the use he has made of the angels in the Paradise Lost, has given a fabulous air to the whole poem. So that with regard to machinery, we can neither make use of the fictions of the ancients with propriety, nor draw any advantage from fubflituting our knowledge for their ignorance: because it is almost impossible to call in any preternatural affiftance to our univerta hero's

bero's support, and at the same time preferve than deference which is due to the one fource of strength from whence we know everything to be derived. If, on the other hand, we reject the fictions of the ancients, and have recourse to the genii and fairies of a later date, we shall be but where we were; for whatever has not either nature, or possibility at least, for its foundation, can please but in part. What, therefore, is to be done? Why, let us endeavour to write from nature; and judge of the menit of our productions by the effect they have upon the heart, and not by the relation they may bear to any given model. For the merit of poetical works is formed on a foundation antecedent and superior to all authority, that of nature and reason. Rules, therefore, being only the consequence of effects, we may much more fafely venture to affirm a piece to be good which gives Q4 universal e ored.

universal pleasure, than that a piece must give satisfaction because it is conformable to any rules or models whatever. It is upon this principle that nobody will ever be able to persuade me that the most admired tragedy of Corneille, with all its boasted correctness and accuracy, is half so good as many a play of Shakespeare, written from the feelings of nature, in open violation of all the established rules for dramatic writing. To have a true relish of the first it is necessary to be a learned man; to enjoy the latter one need be but a man,

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I Make no doubt, my amiable Charlotte, but you have justice enough to imagine with what impatience I wait for liberty to attend you at —. I hoped to have been so happy as to set out the latter end of this month; but I find now it will be impossible for me to put my business in such a train as I could wish to leave it in to a friend, before the middle of next. I have occasion for all my philosophy, to make me bear this disappointment with tolerable credit to my character; which I wish to be that of a cool man, not easily russed: but I find that if I could exert my favourite patience

this case, I should lose the esteem of all the ladies of my acquaintance, and not improbably of yourfelf amongst the number, at least in some degree; for however a philofophical coolness may be an eligible quality in a friend, it is but a poor recommendation in a lover. I have one confolation, however, in this delay, and that is, that I shall have made my little retreat more fit for your reception, when you will compleat my happiness by taking possession of it. It employs all the time I can spare from business, and my patron flatters me so far as to pass some of his leisure hours there, and condescends to amuse himself with my miniature projects. He is now making fome improvements in the plan of my little garden, which I am not at present in the fecret of; and the same taste which has enabled him to shew the magnificent beauties of nature to advantage at his own feat, is now

now affifting him in throwing up a few loads of earth for a mount, or disposing a score or two of shrubs in such a manner as to produce the most pleasing effect at mine. I fee him now in deep discourse with my gardener; and, by the considerate gravity of his look, one would imagine that he was engaged in some contrivance of the highest importance; but, if I may venture to guess at the subject of his thoughts, he is endeavouring to hit upon a proper spot for my flower-knot. I am become a great florist; to which I am chiefly induced by the narrow limits of my territories, which are well enough calculated to contain a great variety of the minute beauties of nature, though I am forced to feek abroad for the more magnificent prospects of wood, lawns, and water. My patron, whose taste is naturally as enlarged as his mind, is apt to rally me sometimes when he catches me deep in the WOO.

the contemplation of the leaves of a carnation or the meal of an auricula; but I get myself off, by telling him that I am only admiring the power of the Author of nature, which my flowers shew to more advantage than his woods; for if his power appears amazing in great objects, it appears infinitely more fo in little ones: infomuch that I question whether the mechanism of the world is fo great a proof of omnipotence, as the texture of the human body. It is upon this principle that I receive such pleafure from every leaf of a flower, that I venture to stile myself a florist, though I should make a bad figure amongst the virtuosos who usually go by that name: for I am totally ignorant of all those properties which the arbitrary caprice of gardeners has made effential to the beauties of a flower, and which are only distinguishable to the eye of a connoisseur. I can relish the beauty of a

flower, but I cannot define it: for which reafon I have endless disputes with my gardener, who would willingly root out of my ground every flower which is not strictly conformable to some certain rules which fomebody has thought proper to lay down as a standard for beauty. I have no patience when he tells me fuch a flower is good for nothing because it has a pin eye, or that fuch an one would be perfect if the colours should break in such a manner; how ridiculous is it to endeavour thus to confine the liberal beauties of nature within the nonfenfical regulations of art! It feems to be the contrivance of some person whose confined genius and littleness of mind made him grudge that even the beauties of nature should be common to vulgar conceptions, and so endeavour to conceal them under a veil of mystery. I am not surprised that Holland should be the land of this fort

florifts; this pedantic kind of knowledge is the proper amusement of a narrow-minded money-getting Dutchman: and if ever we find it prevalent amongst people of our own nation, it is amongst those who from a long attention to interest have acquired a narrow way of thinking, and a fet of contracted notions which pursue them into their amusements, and lead them to divide their gardens into squares and triangles, and cut their trees into the shapes of beasts and I take it to be a standing rule of falle tafte to attempt to correct nature by a pompous display of art; for which reason you will find nothing with me, but nature with her redundancies a little pruned; and wherever I have made use of art, I have taken all possible care to conceal it. My flower knot, indeed, will feem to flare me in the face in full glow of beauty to contradict this affertion; but even there I have

only collected those beauties which the liberal hand of nature had scattered abroad, into one spot, which is no more than doing justice to her works, by shewing them to the greatest advantage. I cannot express the pleasure I find in providing for your future amusement in this spot. With what regret do I quit it for the hurry and buftle of the town! Even the joys of fociety, heightened as they are to me by the charms of novelty, lose great part of their effect upon me; and I retire to my own thoughts with as much fatisfaction as if I had been glutted with fociety all my life-time. I now find that when the mind is thoroughly attached to one object, it is with difficulty that we bring it to attend to any thing elfe. Every thing feems impertinent which has not fome reference to the favourite scheme: you will eafily imagine therefore that at prefent my own thoughts are my most agreeable comdistribit affertion : but even there I have

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panions, because they entertain me incesfantly with you. If by any means my journey should meet with any farther delay, adieu to philosophy! A philosopher may with patience facrifice his happiness to virtue, but not to business: the man who does not think love as much superior to interest, as virtue is to love, does not deferve my Charlotte; what then must be deserve, who can be detained by a dirty regard to interest, when virtue and love join to call him another way? No, my Charlotte, nothing but death or fickness shall prevent my attending you the middle of next month, Adieu for the present: some affairs call me away, which I shall be content to do ill, to do them quick, and return with the more expedition to the enjoyment of you and myfelf alodw a or bezudinb stinst bail

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LETTER XXXIII. to philosophy! A philosopher may with

ALTAMONT to HENRY.

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TOW very trite is the observation, that L " no man is contented with his fituation in life!" Not a moralift, from Horace to our own time, that it has escaped; they all cry qui fit Mecanas? and all solve the question by the natural discontent and restleffness of the human mind. Since I became more conversant amongst men, I find the fact so much more generally true than I was aware of in my folitude (for I am apt to make great allowances where I find faults attributed to a whole species) that I am apt to think there must be some other reason to be assigned for it than a LETTER R

meer capricious discontent. When we confider that particular turn of mind which leads different men, we know not why, to different pursuits, and which we distinguish by the name of Genius; how very difficult it is to ascertain, especially before that age when the plan of education makes it convenient to determine the pursuit of our future lives; how many circumstances may interfere to check, to divert, to obstruct its course, even if it is discovered; how many views of interest, convenience, propriety, inclination may prevent those who have the disposal of us from attending to this natural turn of our mind; or, if we are left more to our own disposal, how many circumstances may concur to mislead our judgment, and to make us mistake a mere desire to imitate any character which we see with pleasure for a bent of genius to pursue the same path; we shall not be surprised

to find fo many unfit for the fituation they are placed in, so many unequal to the part they have undertaken, and so many disfatisfied with the objects they are bound to purfue. There is nothing more deceitful than those marks which may be supposed to lead us to a knowledge of the turn of mind in young people: whatever images occur most frequently to their observation, will make the strongest impression upon them; and a natural fondness for imitation, will be easily mistaken for an effort of genius. child of an officer hears continually of arms, of courage, of military honours, gay cloaths, of promotions, of respect: his spirit is rouzed, his imagination is set to work, he longs to be a general, and declares for the army. The child of a merchant has continually before his eyes the comforts of affluence, hears constantly of the advantages of trade; has his head full

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merchandize, interest, credit, of figures, money, which every thing around him tends to persuade him is the most desirable of all bleffings: he looks with pleafure upon his father's strong box, and determines to be a merchant. In the fame manner in every flation of life young people are fond of the thoughts of imitating that character which is most frequently before their eyes, and which, from the person who bears it, they are taught to have a respect for. And it is not the defire of performing the duties of the station, but of shining in the honours, or reaping the advantages of it, that engages their attention: the young officer has no inclination for being a fubaltern, confined to his quarters, fent upon hard fervice, or reduced to halfpay; but for having five hundred men at his command, and figuring, a man of confequence, at the head of his regiment. The young

young merchant has no particular attachment to the journal and ledger, but only is pleased with the thoughts of being a rich When therefore the duties, which form the intermediate steps to the wishedfor station, begin to grow irksome, they begin to find that they have mistaken their genius, and to envy every one who is engaged in a different pursuit. This is often the case, where parents with a laudable caution endeavour to confult the natural genius of a child, and lead him to pursue what he is fit for, rather than Arive against the grain to fit him for what he is to pursue: they are sometimes apt to pay attention to the casual inclination of a boy, which may be merely temporal, and depend upon occasional circumstances, rather than what obfervations they may be able to make of the constant bent of his mind. If a boy has any strong bent of genius, which leads him

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to any particular pursuit, there is no occafion to ask him what it is; it will sufficiently flew itself to an accurate observer. True genius does not appear in an impetuous defire for any thing, but unfolds itself by degrees in a fuccession of involuntary proofs, which are the simple effects of nature, not the uncertain efforts of momentary inclination. The unnatural rebellion which happened in Scotland in the year 1745, when every man was obliged to think of being a foldier in his own defence, fpread fuch a military ardour through the nation, as carried many a young man into the army whose genius lay far another way: but when the face of affairs was changed, he found time to discover his mistake. And my patron has at this time a wretched gardener, who is continually amufing himfelf with a mallet and chiffel, and would have made an excellent carpenter, but that unfortunately

fortunately his father happened to be a gardener. Thus if we suppose even that every father consults the genius of his fon before he determines upon his profession, when the discovery of this genius is liable to so many difficulties, what wonder is it that we find so many people unhappy in their fituation from having discovered too late that their genius has been miftaken? But the wonder will appear still less if we consider how many circumstances concur to prevent the generality of fathers from piving this attention to the bent of their childrens minds. Every father naturally defires to place his fon to advantage in the world; he therefore confiders in what profession he is most likely to succeed, either by the interest of himself or friends. If the poor boy is decreed to a learned profession, let his natural parts be what they may, he is to be whipped through a school, and obliged to fortunately R. 4 get

get as many lines by heart, and compose as many verses, as those whose genius perhaps leads them naturally to what is to him all labour against the stream : for I am informed that even in the best schools very little regard can be paid to the different capacities of boys, as the number of them makes it necessary for them to be divided into a few different classes, in which every boy is to perform the same task in the same time, or suffer for it by a severe corporal punishment. In this way the poor boy is hurried on, contracting every day a greater diflike for a profession which renders him liable to fo many uneafinesses to arrive at it, and is by this means thoroughly difgusted with it before he is initiated. What progress he is likely to make in any profession which he engages in under ob these circumstances, it is easy to foresee: he neglects his bufiness, acquires neither

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advancement nor reputation, repines at his lot, and is stigmatifed with the character of an idle, discontented fellow: but where is the justice of such a reproach? Are not rather his teeth fet on edge by the four grapes which his father had eaten? This then may be one reason for the discontent which is so prevalent amongst all ranks of men, with regard to their station in life; and to this, and not merely to a capricious turn of mind, may be owing the neglect which' many shew to the business of their profession, whilst they are pursuing the bent of their genius in attending to studies which may happen to lie far another way; and then, however successful such a person may be in his favourite pursuit, he has very good fortune if the generality of the world do not fay "he had better be minding his business." Why then is not his business what his genius and inclination would lead him

him to mind? Is it from idleness that a lawyer bestows more time and pains in writing a tragedy than would have been sufficient to have made him master of all the learning of Coke. Or that a clergyman employs the greatest part of his life in forming fo uleful a digest of all the laws of the kingdom as no lawyer ever accomplished? And yet there will be numbers who will condemn the former for neglecting law for poetry, and think that the latter commits little less than facrilege in applying his time to any other study than that of divinity.- There are no people of any profession who are so much exposed to this illiberal kind of censure as the clergy: their education naturally gives them an enlarged way of thinking, and a tafte for literature; and yet the world are apt to think they are deviating from their character, if they apply themselves to the study of any thing but what sda sa

what has an immediate reference to their profession. Nay so confined are they in their notions upon this head, that they will not fuffer a clergyman even to teach them their duty in any way but one. The generality of people feem to have no idea that the cause of virtue may be as much promoted, and the principles of our religion as strongly enforced, by a series of moral precepts and examples conveyed in the form of a novel, or brought home to our feelings in a well written tragedy or moral comedy, as they may be by the closest argumentation oin the most learned sermon. It is from this narrow way of thinking that those illiberal reflections proceed which we hear thrown out every day against those of the clergy who, without neglecting the cause of virtue, have applied themselves to the study of the belles letres, "that the clergy, now-a-days, fludy all history but that of the Bible," that se the

the clergy neglect fermons to write novels, and quit the pulpit for the stage," and twenty fuch remarks, which prove nothing but the narrow-minded malevolence of those who make them. I cannot see how the character of a clergyman can be injured by fuch writings as tend to correct the human heart, and to support the cause of virtue, by influencing the passions in its favour; or why an interesting story, calculated to shew the ill effects of vice, and the bleffings which attend a virtuous course of life, is not as worthy to employ the pen of a clergyman, as a volume of fermons, which may have the same tendency with less effect. They who give into this kind of censure are, in general, very fond of authority; I would therefore ask them, whether they think it reflects any dishonour on the character of the great arch-bishop of Cambray, to have been the author of the novel called safe He was made bishop of Osfory in 1552.

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the Adventures of Telemachus? or, if they object that he was a papift; what do they think of the pious bishop Bale, * one of the early Protestant bishops, who was the auther of twenty-one dramatic pieces, all of them on religious subjects, and most of them founded upon different parts of the life and death of our bleffed Saviour? which were written with fuch spirit and pious zeal, that the enemies of our religion held him in the greatest abhorrence as the most formidable champion which the church had in her fa-These authorities will, perhaps, weigh more with them than with me, for you well know that I am not apt in general to lay much stress upon authority; they who have reason on their side, have no occasion for it; and for those who have not, who are generally the first to fly to it as their only recourse, it proves no more than that fuch

He was made bishop of Ossory in 1552.

a great man was liable to be mistaken as well as they. However that may be in the present case, I have, you see, very respectable authority on my side of the question, and valeat quantum valere potest.

It is almost impossible, from the connection which the liberal sciences have with each other, for a man of extensive genius and a learned education to confine his attention entirely to one subject. Why then is a man who engages in any of the learned professions obliged to attach himself to the knowledge peculiar to that alone, to the exclusion of all other learning however useful or engaging? The only answer which can be given to this question is, because his maintenance depends upon it; because no one will chuse to trust the management of their spiritual concerns, their health or their property, to the clergyman, physician,

or lawyer, who does not feem to give up his time and attention to the studies peculiar w to his profession. If that is the case, happy are they who are brought up to fome manual trade, with liberty to employ their leizure hours in whatever pursuit their inclination leads them to. Happy am I, my Henry, thanks to my ever generous patron, who am engaged in a business which, as though it confines me for some hours in ans day, has no claim upon my attention at any other time, and leaves me at least some portion of my time to pursue the bent of my genius in, without hurting my interest, or violating the abfurd laws of propriety and decorum. But thrice happy they whose affluence of fortune makes it unnecessary for them to engage in any profession; and enables them to pursue whatever study their genius leads them to without any restraint, and to vary their attention to different sciwhich almost alone makes an independant fortune desirable. Of all freedom surely a literary freedom is the most to be envied! I shall therefore be very cautious how I accuse any one of idleness, whom I find uneasy at the restraint which his profession may subject him to, even the he were to acknowledge that he should be equally distatisfied with any other; because I am well assured that they who would least wish to be idle, would most wish not to have their attention confined to any one particular object, and so must have an equal distinct to all professions.

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ALTAMONT.

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LETTER XXXIV.

ALTAMONT to HENRY.

London.

I was yesterday at an auction of pictures, and was hardly more entertained with the beauty of the collection than with the rage of the virtuos, who seemed to pay for what they bought not so much in proportion to the beauty of the piece, as the credit of the painter; so that in many instances they were merely buying a name. I have, as you may easily imagine, no great knowledge in pictures; but a great fondness for them has led me to take all opportunities of examining and prying into the merits of different painters, and by the help of observation and information to increase

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my fatisfaction in looking at them. My friend the connoisseur, whom I mentioned to you in a former letter, joined me yesterday, as I was admiring a landscape; and, as he never misses an opportunity of displaying the very little knowledge he has to those who, he has great reason to think, have less, he immediately began to inform me, by the help of his catalogue, who the picture was done by, and to point out the peculiar excellencies for which that painter was famous. He shewed me in that single picture an instance of every beauty which he had ever heard attributed to Tintoret in his life; and pointed out fo many infallible marks by which to discover his stile, that I was fatisfied I knew Tintoret's pictures without the help of a catalogue, as well as I do your hand-writing, without your name at the bottom. In short I was the dupe of his decifive language, and was in raptures with Tintoret:

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Tintoret: till upon consulting my own catalogue, I found that he had, in his eagerness to shine, mistaken the number; and that the most beautiful landscape of the celebrated Tintoret, was the performance of a modern artist of very moderate fame. I am ashamed to own how quickly all its beauties vanished even in my eye. But what was my consusion compared to that of my friend! when he saw this capital picture sold for thirty shillings, instead of the seventy pounds which he had told me was about the value of it.

When I considered the pleasure which even the faults of this picture had given me whilst I fancied them beauties, I could not help thinking of the observation of an ingenious * moralist, that " sense and good

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talte often suffer from the defects which folly and bad tafte enjoy." And upon this principle it feems a question whether great tafte and delicate fenfibility do not rob us of more enjoyment than they can give us in return. The world is full of imperfections; falle tafte and absurdity abound every where in every art and fcience, to burt the philofopher, and shock the man of delicate feelings; the mind therefore which is, as it were, tuned by the fame scale, and not only feels no shock from, but can enjoy those very imperfections, seems to bid fairest for happiness. When I see five hundred people in raptures at a ballad at the playhouse, whilst one unhappy connoiffeur in mufic is pronouncing it execrable, and almost stopping his ears, I cannot help queftioning whether he does not pay very dear for his knowledge, when he purchases it at the price of being the only unhappy person

out

out of such a number. If it is from a superiority of knowledge or feeling that we are hurt by what gives others pleafure, may we not fay it is a painful pre-eminence? What do we get by acquiring such a delicacy of taste and accuracy of discernment, as confines our enjoyment to that idea of perfection which is fo rarely to be met with? Do not we rather lessen our chance for happiness, in proportion as we make it more difficult to be acquired, by decreafing the number of circumstances which might contribute to it? The superficial man seems to have that propenfity to happiness which we are apt to almost envy in a child; a toy. a straw, a feather gives him delight. The half-formed connoisseur, like an overgrown school-boy, is ashamed to be pleased with trifles, and yet has too little knowledge to have a true relish of higher enjoyments. The man of real tafte and accurate discernment,

ment, like many a learned, finished man, refines to much upon his pleasures, and weighs them in fo fevere a balance, that he loses happiness in seeking after persection. According to which scale it appears probable that the happiest man may be a man of less knowledge than we are apt to imagine. Indeed if we confider how small a proportion the men of genius, taste, and learning bear to the rest of the world, it would seem very hard if ignorance and mifery were infeparable. And yet if we consider, on the other hand, how much labour and attention is necessary to attain a competent degree of learning and knowledge in order to form a correct and judicious tafte in any branch of literature or science, it would appear as hard, if no additional fatisfaction, no higher degree of happiness was to result from it. Therefore, in fact, neither of these hard suppositions is the case. The

man of learning and genius does not lofe his labour, because he is conscious of that elevated delight, that exquisite satisfaction which nothing but true tafte can give, or And for that very reason the igconceive. norant man is not unhappy in his ignorance, because he does not envy the man of taste those enjoyments of which he can have no conception. Ask the man whose ear is of fo unharmonious a cast as not to find any difference between the most perfect concord and the harshest discord, what he thinks of the rap ures which a mufical man feems to feel at a fine piece of music? If he is candid, he will tell you they are above his comprehension; if not, he will fay they are affected. Ask him if he does not envy a man who has a tafte for mufic? whether he does not think it an invaluable bleffing, a fixth fense, from which he is unhappy to be excluded? Not a bit of all S 4 this

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this how should he be unhappy at the loss of what he never knew the value of? But ask the man of true taste and feeling in mufic, what he would take to part with that qualification, feldom as his opportunities may be of indulging it in the perfection he would wish? His answer will at once convince you how much the exquifite though less frequent enjoyments of taste, are to be preferred to the cold, infipid pleafures of ignorance, though, fuch as they are, they occur every hour. The man of tafte therefore may pity him who is devoid of it; but the ignorant man will never envy the man of tafte: He thinks himself happier as he is. How kindly contrived is the difposition of benefits in this world, where a real deficiency is often made amends for by an imaginary advantage!

So, according to the fabulist, when ignorance was brought to bed of opinion, pride and idleness, the parents of ignorance, attended upon the occasion, and without hesitation named the child Truth.

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Your last letter, which I have this moment received, gives me the most real uneasiness. Would to God the grief of you and my dearest Charlotte might be alleviated by the part which I bear in it: I well know how heavy the loss of such a father must fall upon you both, who have never experienced the tender care of any other relation: but is not my Henry unkind, in saying that he is lest to the wide world, without a home, without a friend? Can he want an assurance that all I have is his? I trust I shall have it in my power in a few days to give to my Charlotte a husband,

band, whose tender attention may in some measure compensate for the loss she has suftained; and to my Henry a friend and brother, whose highest joy it will be to promote his happiness. I hope to be with you almost as foon as this letter. I shall fet out in two days. I have written a long letter to my father, in order to prepare him for the earnest request which I have to make to him to add to the felicity of us all by spending the rest of his days amongst us: I have no doubt but you and my Charlotte will give me your affistance; and I think his resentment against the world will not be fo strong as the attention which he has always shewed to the happiness of those who are dear to him. With what joy should we all unite in endeavouring to make the remainder of his days pass in peace and happinefs! And furely it will give him pleafure to supply the place of the dear friend band he

he has loft in the care of those children which he has left behind him. Even if that pleasure is not unmixed; if a long indulgence of folitary reflection may make a return to the buftle of the world in some measure painful to him; he will recollect the faultring voice of his dear friend, which recommended you to his care in the last words it uttered, and he will no longer feel any pain in fulfilling the request. He will, he must, make us happy, by his compliance. I cannot bear the thoughts of that truly admirable man ending his days in the indulgence of that gloomy misanthropy which is the only foible in his excellent nature. O my Henry, how little do we confult our own happiness, when we are inattentive to that of others! What an argument is it in favour of the wisdom of HIM who formed the universe, that he has made our very being depend upon a due discharge

of the focial duties to each other ! And what an argument is it in favour of his goodness, that he has promised to reward us in the next life for a due observance of those virtues which can alone make us happy in this! Yes, my friend, if we will be happy, we must not fly from the fociety of men, but conduct ourselves wisely in the midft of it. That amiable philanthropy, which is the fource of every focial virtue, will make us dear to man and acceptable to God. We are by him connected with each other; it is not by thwarting his defigns and breaking that connection that we shall render him acceptable service, but by performing with diligence the parts which he has affigned us. Our own feelings confirm this; do we ever offer up our prayers to God with more delicious fatisfaction of mind, than after having performed a good action to man? As long therefore

as our lives pass quietly on in a regular discharge of our duty to each other, the continual presence of the Almighty will never distressus; it will give us more comfort than fear. They only dread the presence of God, who are remiss in their duty towards man.

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We know who laid a peculiar stress upon the command to love one another, and taught us that brotherly affection to each other is the only way we have of shewing the sincerity of our attachment to him. We are not therefore to sly from the world and forfeit its blessings, because the enjoyment of them is attended with danger. What soldier ever enjoyed the spoils, who dreaded the terrors of the battle? He only can be said to overcome the world, who, scorning to seek security by slight, walks unmoved in a calm, steady perseverance in a virtuous course of life, keeping his eye six-

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ed Redfally upon his duty, without fuffering it to be called off by the frowns of misfortune or the smiles of pleasure. The terrors of the world will have no effect upon him, for he looks beyond them; its pleasures will have as little, for he feels more substantial happiness in his own breast than they have to offer him. The voluptuous man will pass him by with pity, and the ambitious with contempt; but, when their own prospects are over-clouded like the fun in a winter's day, they will return fatigued and dejected, and fee, with envy, his countenance as ferene and his heart as chearful as when they left him. Every focial connection is to him a fource of happiness, as it is a source of duty: the more active his part is, the more happiness he teels in performing it to his own fatisfaction. He engages with eagerness in all the duties of hus manity, and feeks no applause but that of his

his own heart. View him as son, brother, husband, father, friend; he is ever active, ever uniform, ever calm, ever happy. His life is a series of blessings to others, and his death a completion of happiness to himself.

O my dearest friend, can any one see these effects of virtue, and not cry out with the wise man, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Adieu, my Henry, a sew days will, I trust, increase the happiness of us all.

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